

No 32.

5 cents.

FAME AND FORTUNE WEEKLY.

STORIES OF
BOYS WHO MAKE MONEY.

ADRIFT ON THE WORLD;
OR, WORKING HIS WAY TO FORTUNE.

By A SELF-MADE MAN.



"Now, you mutinous young dog!" exclaimed Captain Simpson, pointing at the open sea. "Down with you into that boat!" "You can't mean to send me adrift in that cockleshell with a storm coming up!" cried Dick, aghast at the prospect.

Fame and Fortune Weekly

STORIES OF BOYS WHO MAKE MONEY

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By A SELF-MADE MAN.

CHAPTER I.

WRECK AND RESCUE.

"It's a fierce night, Caleb," said Ned Martin, a broad-shouldered, dark-featured man of forty, as he entered the living-room of the Manacle Light, after a trip aloft to the lantern, where the powerful revolving lamps were throwing alternate red and white flashes out to sea at intervals of fifteen seconds.

"Aye, aye, Martin, it is uncommonly rough to-night. There's a sou'east gale on for a fact, and it bids fair to be the worst of the season."

Thus spoke Caleb Calder, a bronzed and hardy-looking man of sixty-four, a typical New England coastman.

"We seem to have nothing but rough nights and days out here," replied his assistant, in a discontented tone, as he drew a stool up to the stove, sat down and began to fill his pipe from a cigar box half full of loose tobacco, which stood on the table beside the lamp.

"You say that because you're not used to the business yet," replied Calder, with a short laugh, as he knocked the dead ashes from his pipe.

"I don't think I'll ever get used to it," growled Martin,

knitting his heavy brows in a savage way that his companion did not fancy. "I hate the life."

"Why, then, did you accept the appointment?" asked Calder, in surprise.

"Because I was hard up and glad to take anything that came my way," replied Martin, striking a match and applying it to the pipe bowl.

"Then, I take it, you don't mean to stay?"

"Not an hour longer than I can pick up something better."

"Your chance of picking up something better is mighty small as long as you remain on the Reef. If you want to better yourself you'd better resign and look for it ashore."

Martin sucked moodily at his pipe and made no answer.

"You're a sailor, ain't you?" asked Calder, after a pause.

His companion nodded.

"If I felt as you do about staying on Manacle Reef, and couldn't do no better, I'd ship."

"You would, eh?"

"I would. That is, if I was your age, with no family ties. You're a youngish man and ought to be able to suit yourself. It's different with me. Still, I'm not complaining."

"How long have you been on the Reef?"

"A matter of ten years."

"Ten years on this wind and wave-swept ledge!" exclaimed Martin, in some surprise. "I don't see how you've stood it."

Calder shrugged his shoulders.

"I've a family to support, and I'm getting along in years, with a touch of the rheumatism in my joints. I've felt one of my spells coming on all day, and I didn't need to look at the barometer to tell me there was a storm brewing out yonder," waving his arm toward the southeast.

"I never had it, and don't want it," growled Martin, expectorating into a box of sawdust beside the stove.

"You'll know what it is if you ever get it," replied the head lightkeeper, grimly. "I'm going to turn in now. I hope I'll be able to relieve you at midnight."

"Don't worry, if you don't feel equal to it," said Martin, refilling his pipe. "I'm in no humor for sleeping to-night, and I'd just as soon take a part, or the whole, of your spell as not. Go to bed, man, and sleep. If I need you, or change my mind, I'll call you."

"That's kind and considerate of you, Martin, I must say, and I shan't forget it," replied Caleb Calder, with a kindlier feeling than usual for his assistant, whom he had not really liked from the day the new man came on duty.

Ned Martin watched his superior walk up the circular iron stairs with a painful limp.

"Ten years on Manacle Reef," he muttered, in a surly whisper. "Why, ten months of this sort of life would drive me crazy."

He relighted his pipe and drew nearer to the stove.

"Blast my luck! Everything has gone against me. Until this job was thrust under my nose I had hard scratching to keep my head above water, and the papers say the country was never so prosperous. Confound the papers! In the same breath they say the rich are getting richer and the poor, poorer. I believe that. Why shouldn't I have plenty of money, too? Why should I be forced to grub for a living when others are living in luxury? It ain't fair." He brought his fist down on the table, angrily. "Why should I stagnate out on this reef, six miles from the shore, while others are enjoying the sweets of life? Things aren't evenly divided. I ought to have my share. And, by heaven, I will have it some day."

It was evident beyond doubt that the demon of discontent had taken possession of the assistant lighthouse keeper.

He sat there moodily puffing his pipe, lost in thought.

Darker and darker grew the night.

Louder and more terrible grew the storm.

He did not seem to heed it, but still smoked on.

The waters that surged around the foundation of the lighthouse boiled with white foam.

Under the fierce blasts that came in from the broad Atlantic, the waves, lashed to madness, would take flying leaps clean over the top of the lantern itself.

At length, as a giant wave launched itself with a terrible shock against the conical white structure, Martin sprang to his feet with a nervous bound.

With something like an oath on his lips he hurried upstairs to the gallery to see if any harm had been done.

"All is safe," he breathed, in a tone of satisfaction. "What an infernal place this is, with its cold, lonely walls and awful sounds! Existence here is but a living death, and yet but for this light such an awful night as this would mean death for many."

As he tried to peer out at sea his face was reflected in the thick ebony panes.

"It's blacker than the ace of spades, and there's a fog coming in, too. I must start the horn."

He walked to the other side of the lantern and looked out toward the shore of Cape Cod, six miles away, but he could make out nothing but the angry foam-lashed waters when the shaft of red or white light flashed for a moment upon the stormy waste.

He descended to the lower floor again, and soon the hoarse, vibrant notes of the fog-horn was heard at regular intervals after that.

Hour after hour passed away, and the gale still seemed to increase in intensity.

Midnight came and passed, but Martin, pacing up and down the room, like some morose beast in its cage, did not go near his companion, who was sleeping peacefully in his cot, on the floor above, to awaken him.

The fog grew thicker, streaming in on the wings of the blast, and the light above had hard work to force its way through it.

The notes of the horn, too, seemed to be torn short off and flung shoreward instead of penetrating seaward where it was needed.

It might have been four o'clock in the morning when, as Martin, who had gone up to make sure everything was all right with the lamps, paused, before descending, to glance out through the glass over the opaque ocean, that he noticed a sudden glare start out of the darkness less than a mile away.

It did not last long, but it looked unreal and ghostly through the dense fog.

"Great heaven!" exclaimed the assistant keeper. "It must be that some vessel is driving in on these rocks. If she strikes not a soul will live to tell the tale."

He hurried below, donned his sou'wester and oiled overgarments and opened the door overlooking the stone steps leading to the landing place, now a mass of yeasty water.

The steps, being to the leeward, were somewhat sheltered by the granite pillar behind, and he was able to make his way to the highest point of the rocks, whence he leveled his night-glass in the direction he had seen the light.

He had been there scarce five minutes, when he saw the glow a second time, much nearer than before.

"It's a vessel, sure enough, and she's doomed, if ever craft was," he muttered.

The light faded and darkness more impenetrable than ever succeeded.

Five, ten minutes passed, and he stood there like a statue in the drenching spray.

Suddenly, in a lull of the gale, he plainly heard a grind-

ing crash, followed immediately by the renewed shrieking of the storm, as if a million fiends were rejoicing over the destruction of a noble craft.

"She's on the rocks and all is over with the poor fellows," he muttered.

It was even more than destruction—it was annihilation.

Every plank in the vessel had been riven asunder by the resistless shock, and in an instant she and her crew had ceased to be.

Martin, with a shudder, gazed around upon the foam-crested water surrounding the lighthouse.

At that moment a faint cry was borne to his ears around the corner of the building.

"What's that?" he exclaimed, his blood quickening with excitement.

"Help! Help!" came floating around on the crest of a wave which spent itself a few yards below his feet.

"Great Scott! Some poor fellow has been borne upon these rocks!" he cried. "Can I save him?"

"Help!"

The cry now came from among the rocks below.

"He must have come in through that channel and is clinging to the rocks at the foot of the landing."

Martin dashed back into the lighthouse, seized a coil of light rope, and tying one end to a ring just outside the doorway, and the other around his waist, made his way down through the blinding spume and dashing water till he reached a point where, almost smothered by the foam, he made out the head and shoulders of a man wedged into a crevice in the rocks.

The assistant lightkeeper was a man of powerful physique, but with all his strength he maintained his hold with great difficulty while he reached down and released the now unconscious man from his terrible position.

He quickly bore him up into the lighthouse, slammed the door shut, and laid him at full length upon the floor near the stove, which he replenished with a couple of shovelful of coal.

"Thank goodness, he is not dead!" he breathed, as he knelt down and felt around the man's heart.

CHAPTER II.

WAS IT MURDER?

The cheering rays of the lamp and the warm glow of the fire fell upon the drenched and unconscious form.

He was a man whose age was probably forty-five, but looked older on account of a thick beard.

His face, neck and hands were bronzed by the sun and wind, and his garments showed that he was the master of the craft which had just gone to destruction on the reef.

"George Porter!" ejaculated Ned Martin, in surprise, after peering down into his face.

The recognition seemed to give him little satisfaction,

for he knitted his brows and a dark look, not pleasant to see, came over his features.

As if the sound of his name had arrested his fleeting senses and called him back to life, the unfortunate man opened his eyes and gazed upon his rescuer.

"Ned Martin!" he cried feebly. "Is it possible I owe my life to you?"

The assistant lightkeeper made no answer, but with folded arms looked upon the person he had called George Porter, while the shadow seemed to deepen on his face.

"Give me a drink," asked the man, feebly, as he strove to raise himself on his elbow. "I am faint."

For an instant Martin hesitated and a hard look came into his eyes, then with a smothered growl he went to a closet, poured some liquor from a bottle into a glass and held the tumbler to George Porter's lips.

He swallowed a portion with some difficulty, gasped, but finally took it all down and, with a sigh, sank back at full length and lay without motion for several minutes.

Perhaps a feeling of pity penetrated Martin's breast as he noted the death-like paleness upon the rescued man's features.

At any rate, he turned away, slipped upstairs and presently returned with a blanket, which he held before the fire to warm.

"Shall I help you take off your wet clothes?" he said, moodily, as he noticed Porter struggle into a recumbent position.

"If you will," was the grateful reply.

After the man was wrapped in the warm blanket, Martin picked up his sodden garments, one by one, and hung them about the table to dry.

His peajacket was the last the lightkeeper took hold of, and as he gave it a shake a fat pocketbook fell out of it on the floor.

Porter saw it fall, snatched it up eagerly and concealed it in the folds of the blanket.

"I mustn't lose that," he said, with a faint smile. "It is my fortune."

His fortune!

The look of sullen discontent, mingled with a gleam of avarice, deepened upon Martin's face.

"You've been fortunate, then, since——"

"Since we last saw each other fifteen years ago? Yes and no."

"What do you mean by that?"

"I've made a little money, it is true," replied George Porter, "as I advanced in my profession, but most of that went down to-night with the loss of my vessel, the Granite State, upon these rocks."

"Most of it?" in surprise.

"All but a few hundred dollars."

"But I thought you said that pocketbook contained your fortune?" said Martin, moistening his dry lips with the edge of his tongue, while his dark eyes gleamed strangely.

"I did," replied the captain, with an eager light in his honest eyes.

"But I don't quite understand how——"

"It can hardly interest you, Ned. Let us talk of something else. How have you fared since last I saw you?"

"How have I fared?" The old sullen look leaped again into his eyes. "I have fared badly."

"I am sorry to hear that, Ned."

"I should fancy you would be glad," replied Martin, harshly.

"Why? Because we parted in anger? You accused me of stealing your sweetheart away from you. You know that was not so. Nell Wentworth never cared for you in that way. You asked her to marry you and she told you she could never be your wife. That was before I asked her the same question."

"I would have won her but for you!" cried Martin, fiercely. "Why did you come between us? Answer me that. Things were coming my way till you began to pay her attention. Then—but I can't talk about it. It drives me mad to think of it. Had I married her I should have been a different man. I should have been prosperous, not the pauper I am to-day. When she married you I went to the dogs. To the dogs—do you understand?"

He stood with clenched fists and flaming eyes above the man he blamed with the ruin of his life, and he did not present a pleasant picture.

George Porter looked up at him without a shade of resentment in his eyes.

He felt sorry for Martin, yet he could not see how he was to blame. He had fairly won the heart of pretty Nellie Wentworth, and, having won her, had married her.

"Let us forget and forgive, Ned. You've saved my life, and I'm grateful to you," he said, wistfully. "Nellie is gone. She's an angel in heaven, and some day you and I will meet her."

Tears glistened in Porter's eyes as he recalled his dead wife, who had been lying in a quiet churchyard on the Cape for six years past, but his emotion had no effect on the man before him.

"Where do you hail from now?" he asked, abruptly, his eyes wandering over the folds of the blanket where the pocketbook lay.

"Melbourne."

"And you were bound in for Boston, of course?"

"Yes."

"Well, you've had hard luck to be wrecked in sight of port almost. But what's the odds so long as you've saved your life and your fortune."

Once more the speaker moistened his dry lips with the edge of his tongue.

"What's the odds, Ned? How can you say that? Think of the poor fellows who have just gone to their long rest. Why, man, every soul aboard the Granite State but myself was lost to-night."

Martin said nothing.

He resumed his stool by the fire, refilled his pipe and began to smoke again.

"You have a son, I think?" said Martin, in a dogged tone.

"I have!" cried the captain, his face lighting up with

pleasure. "My boy Dick is sixteen years old, and a braver or smarter lad never lived."

"I've seen him."

"Of course you have, for he lives in Southold village, hard by," said George Porter, in an animated tone. "When did you see him last?"

"A week ago."

"And how is he?" eagerly. "Well, of course. And active as a young monkey."

"He was all right."

"I wrote him from Rio Janeiro where we put in, and of course he's got my letter and is expecting to see his father any day now. You're not a father, Ned, so you can't understand the joy, the eagerness, with which I long to clasp him to my heart. He's got his mother's eyes, and the same fair, curly hair. She lives over again in Dick. Yes, yes, she does indeed."

Martin, who had listened with ill-concealed impatience to this speech, rose to his feet and laid his pipe on the table.

"I'm going up to the lantern," he said, curtly.

"Don't mind me, Ned," replied George Porter, cheerfully. "I'm going to try a few hours' sleep. I'm sadly tuckered out. If you'd give me another sip of that brandy I think it would put fresh life into me."

Without a word, Ned Martin brought him another drink.

The captain of the ill-fated Granite State drained it, thanked Martin and then turned over as if to compose himself to sleep.

The assistant lightkeeper mounted to the gallery and found the light going all right.

The worst of the gale now seemed to be over, and the fog has cleared away.

The full moon occasionally peeped through the flying scud that hid the greater part of the heavens, and painted a fleeting pathway across the troubled waters.

Martin returned downstairs.

After shutting off the fog-horn he once more seated himself before the stove.

His gaze rested on George Porter, whose deep and regular breathing showed that he was asleep.

"So he's made his fortune, has he?" growled the lightkeeper. "And he wouldn't tell me anything about it. It wouldn't interest me, he said. Wouldn't interest me, eh?"

He got up and began to pace the room again.

Finally he went to the closet and took a stiff glass of brandy.

The liquor set his already excited blood on fire, and sent it dancing through his brain.

"He won a wife that ought to have been mine, and now he's won a fortune, while I'm as poor as Job's turkey. Some men seem to catch all the luck that's going, while others, as good or better, are left in the lurch. It's unfair!"

He strode up and down the room in a nasty frame of mind.

"I'd like to see the inside of that pocketbook," he said, stopping suddenly and looking hungrily at the sleeper.

"Well, what's to hinder me doing it? The man's asleep. He'll never know it."

Martin approached the unconscious captain and glared balefully down at him.

He stood in an uncertain attitude for several minutes, then he went to the closet and took a second drink, which seemed to nerve him for the purpose he had in view.

Before returning to the sleeper he tip-toed up the iron stairs and looked in at Caleb Calder.

The head keeper was still in a profound slumber.

"He's safe enough," muttered Martin, turning around and descending.

He went directly up to George Porter and knelt beside him.

"I wonder what he's done with it?" he breathed.

He cautiously felt through the folds of the blanket.

"Ah!" he exclaimed at last, as his fingers closed on the coveted article and softly drew it out.

The sleeper stirred and partially turned over, but did not awake.

Martin, after that slight shock of alarm, carried the pocketbook to the stove, sat down and opened the water-soaked flap.

Then he began to go through the book.

He found about three hundred dollars in bills, which accounted for the swelled appearance of the book.

"Only \$300," he muttered after he had counted them, gingerly, for they were stuck together. "What's \$300? That surely isn't his fortune."

He put the money back and then examined the other compartments.

"Nothing but papers," he whispered, hoarsely. "I must look at them. Perhaps one of them will throw light on this fortune he spoke about."

He unfolded them, one after another, and found they related to merely trivial matters—things that in no wise interested him, and he put them all back.

"What could he have referred to?" thought Martin, disappointedly. "Ah, there's a compartment I overlooked. Let me see what that contains."

He drew out a discolored piece of brownish paper.

After drying it as well as he could by the lamp, he unfolded it and began to read the writing within.

It took some patience for him to decipher it, for it was written in a cramped, uneducated hand, but as the sense of it unfolded itself to his mind, his eyes sparkled and he ran his tongue frequently across his lips, like a famished animal scenting food at a distance.

"A golden reef in the Victoria Range, New South Wales—the rocks alive with glittering quartz the like of which no man has yet seen—millions in sight!"

Martin fairly gasped.

"And here are the plain directions that point the way to this new El Dorado. How came Porter to get this? Why, the man will become a second Monte Cristo! Talk about luck!"

The assistant lightkeeper glared hungrily at the paper.

"I hold a fortune in my hand, and yet it is not mine,"

he whispered, huskily. "Yet why shouldn't it be mine? He won't miss the paper for days, probably, and by that time I can be far away from here. I could ship for Melbourne or Sidney either from Boston or New York. It is the one chance of my life! Why, then, should not I grasp it? By heavens, I will!"

He hastily closed the pocketbook and was about to return it to the blanket when he was startled to observe the wide-open eyes of George Porter full upon him.

"What are you doing with my pocketbook, Ned Martin?" asked the captain, starting up excitedly. "Would you rob me?"

"Nobody wants to rob you. I was merely looking to see what you had. Here, take back your pocketbook. I expected it contained thousands of dollars instead of which there's but a paltry three hundred," and, with a strange, embarrassed laugh, he tossed the wallet at the recumbent man.

"You have something in your fingers, Ned," said the captain, sternly.

He tore open the pocketbook and quickly turned to the last compartment, which, as he seemed to suspect, he found vacant.

"Give me back that paper!" he cried, rising to his feet, and, leaning forward, made a snatch at his property.

"On one condition only shall you have it: that you swear to give me a half interest in the Golden Reef. Is it a bargain?" exclaimed Martin, eagerly.

"No, it is not a bargain. You have no right to ask for it. The Golden Reef is my boy's fortune."

"Never!" almost shouted Martin, furiously. "Since you refuse to give me half I will take the whole. The paper is in my possession and I will keep it."

"You shall not!" cried George Porter, the excitement of the moment giving strength to his weakened body. "Give me back that paper, you thief!"

The word "thief" struck Martin like a blow.

To this was added his disappointment and chagrin at the failure of his plan to get away in safety with the precious document.

His face grew distorted with rage.

A blind fury, aggravated by the brandy he had drunk, seized upon his brain, and drawing back his ponderous fist he struck at the captain with every ounce of power in his muscular arm.

The blow took effect over the unfortunate man's heart, and he dropped like an ox stricken in the shambles.

He lay there beside the table in a heap, just as he fell, and never moved again.

Martin's anger passed away as he began to realize what he had done.

"Dead!" he gasped, as he bent down and felt of the captain's heart. "And I am his murderer. No, no, I did not mean to kill him! I did not mean——"

He heard a sound above and his quick ears told him that Caleb Calder was aroused and might be down at any moment.

"He mustn't be found here in this condition," he

breathed, in frantic fear. "I shall be accused of taking his life. No one saw me bring him in. He shall go back to the waves whence he came."

Seizing the naked body of George Porter in his arms he bore it to the door, and, stepping outside, flung it into the still boiling sea.

Returning rapidly to the room, he grabbed the half-dried garments and then sent them after their late owner.

Closing the door, he found Caleb Calder coming slowly and with some difficulty down the stairs.

"Ha, Martin, I thought I heard voices down here," he said, as he reached the foot of the flight. "Of course I must have been mistaken. No one could reach the reef on such a night as this. Why, man alive, what's the matter with you?" in surprise. "You're as white as a sheet and trembling as with the ague. You haven't seen any of the ghosts of the Manacles, have you?" with a laugh.

"Ghosts!" cried Martin, looking fearfully around as if he expected to see the accusing spirit of the man he had killed standing near.

"Aye, aye, the shades of those who, in years gone by, lost their lives on the reef before this light was put here. I've heard they haunt the rocks on stormy nights, but I never saw them myself as long as I've been here."

"No, no!" cried Martin, with feverish energy. "I've seen nothing—nothing, I tell you!"

"You needn't shout at me. I can hear you plain enough. Thank heaven I'm not deaf yet. But what is the matter with you?"

"Nothing," replied the assistant keeper, turning his back on Calder.

CHAPTER III.

"GRANITE STATE, BOSTON."

"Hello, Gip, where bound this morning?" cried the cheery voice of Dick Porter, aged sixteen, and the smartest boy in Southold village, as everybody said.

He had come down on the beach for an early morning walk, and found his chum, Gip Calder, at the lighthouse landing, evidently preparing to go off somewhere in his small sailboat.

"I'm going out to the Manacles with a message to father. Will you come?"

"Sure I'll come," replied Dick, eagerly, for he dearly loved a sail on the water.

"Jump in, then, old man. I'm all ready to push off."

Dick, accordingly, leaped into the little boat, and in another moment she shot away from the small wharf and was dancing over the sun-kissed waves toward the Manacle Light, six miles distant.

"That was a fierce sou'east gale we had last night, Gip," remarked Dick.

"Bet your life it was. See how rough the water still is."

"I lay awake half the night worrying over it."

"How is that?" asked Gip, in some surprise.

"Why, I expect my father will arrive any day now, and I hate to think of the Granite State off this coast in such a storm."

"Pshaw! There isn't much danger these days, with the lights to guide a vessel into Boston harbor. Why, you're hardly out of sight of one. You sight the Manacle almost as soon as you lose the Nantucket Shoals light, and before the Manacle is below the horizon you catch the white light on the point of the Cape. And so on. Oh, your father isn't in any fear of running ashore for the want of a guide to point out his course."

"I should hope not; but, all the same, I've been kind of nervous of late. You see, Gip, I had a bad dream the other night about father, and I can't get it out of my mind."

"What was it about?"

"I thought I saw the Granite State go on the Manacles during a fearful storm, just like last night's. Everybody was lost except my father, and I saw him washed right up to the lighthouse steps.

"Well," said Gip Calder, much interested, "what else?"

"I thought I saw the new lightkeeper, Edward Martin, pull him out of the water and take him into the lighthouse. Then I woke up."

"That was a great old dream," grinned Gip.

"It was terribly realistic," said Dick, soberly.

It was clear the vision had made a deep impression on his mind.

"Well, it was only a dream, so what's the odds?"

"Dreams sometimes come true, Gip," said Dick, earnestly.

"That's right, too."

"I haven't seen my father in three years. I got a letter from him last week, mailed from Rio Janeiro. He wrote that if all went well he expected to be in Boston about the first week in May. This is the first week in May, so I'm on the lookout for him. He may have got a touch of last night's gale, which probably was felt from Nantucket to Maine."

In the course of an hour they arrived at the Manacle Light, and while Gip was talking with his father in the living-room, Dick bounded upstairs to the lantern to take a look out at sea, thinking, perhaps, he might see some vessel bound toward Boston, which his fancy would suggest was the expected Granite State.

Ned Martin, silent and moody, was cleaning the lamps when he sprang into the gallery.

The sudden appearance of the boy startled him, and as he recognized the visitor he gazed upon him with fear-stricken eyes.

"Back, boy!" he cried, hoarsely. "Don't touch me!"

Dick was surprised at this greeting.

"I'm not going to touch you, Mr. Martin," replied Dick.

"I can move around without interfering with your business."

"What brought you up here?" roughly.

"I came up to take a look seaward."

"What for?"

"I'm expecting the arrival of my father any day now, and——"

"Your father!" gasped Martin, in an awe-stricken voice.

"Why, Mr. Martin, how queer you——"

"Don't look at me in that way, boy—don't, I tell you!" cried Martin, lifting his arms as if to shield himself from the lad.

Dick was more and more astonished at the assistant lightkeeper's behavior.

Although he knew the man but slightly, still Martin had maintained a friendly attitude toward him until that moment.

Dick judged he had been drinking, and under this impression he drew away from him and began to look seaward, where he made out the long, low, black hull of a coast steamer headed northward.

He could hear Martin muttering to himself behind him as he returned to his work on the lamps.

Dick remained fifteen minutes in the lantern and then returned below, rather glad to get away from the society of Martin.

He found Gip waiting for him.

"Let's take a scramble around on the rocks?" proposed his chum. "The tide is low, and we may find some strange marine animal stranded after last night's storm."

Dick had no objection, so the two boys started out to pick their way over the black rocks, the lower edges of which were green and slimy, and dangerous to tread upon.

At low tide the entire Manacle Reef was exposed above the sea level, and it extended for some little distance on either side of the lighthouse.

The boys wandered to the left, and it was not long before they had evidence that a vessel had recently been wrecked in that vicinity.

"Must have been a good-sized craft by the length of that spar," said Gip, pointing to what had once been the yard of a ship.

"Your father said nothing about any vessel going ashore here last night, did he?" asked Dick, looking at his friend, attentively.

"Not a word."

"I should think he'd have known something about it if any wreck had occurred."

"Usually, yes; but last night dad had one of his rheumatic attacks, and he says Martin allowed him to sleep clear through his regular watch. By the way, you were talking of dreams some time ago, do you know dad told me he dreamed last night that there was a visitor at the light during the storm."

"A visitor!"

"Yes; but it was only a dream, you know. Why, who'd come off to the Manacles in such a gale, and how would he be able to land if he did?"

"That's true."

"The funny thing about it is this: The dream was so vivid that it woke pop up, and for the moment he was ready to swear that he heard Martin and somebody else talking in a high-pitched key. He got up, came out on the land-

ing and listened, but he only heard Martin moving around the room below. He dressed and came down, when he saw Martin coming in at the door. He says the man's face was as white as death. He asked him what was the matter with him, but got only short answers. Ever since the assistant keeper has been acting strangely. Pop is afraid he's going off his base."

"He acted very queer when I was in the lantern, where he's cleaning the lamps, a little while ago," replied Dick.

"Dad says he told him last night that he was sick of the job out here."

"I don't wonder at that. It's a lord-forsaken place, especially when the weather is dirty, and it's been more or less rough ever since the new keeper has been here."

"That's what it has. Hello! Here's part of a boat. Maybe it's got the name of the vessel on it that was lost last night."

Gip scrambled down the slippery rocks, with due caution, to the spot where the after-part of a ship's gig was jammed into a wide crevice.

He stepped into it and looked over the stern, where he expected he might find the name painted.

He was not mistaken, but the words he saw there gave him quite a shock.

Those words were "Granite State," and he knew that was the name of the ship his chum's father was captain of, and which was daily expected in those waters.

"Well," Dick called down to him, "what do you see?"

"Nothing," answered Gip, turning a pale countenance toward his companion.

"Nothing?"

Gip made no reply, but slowly picked his way back again to the top of the rocks.

He hadn't the heart to tell his friend what he had seen.

He knew such a disclosure would have a terrible effect on Dick.

"What's the matter with you, Gip?" asked his chum, after they had walked some yards away from the wreck of the boat, noticing Calder's abstracted manner.

"Matter!" said Gip, forcing a laugh. "Why, what should be the matter with me?"

"I give it up," answered Dick. "You should know best."

"Oh, there's nothing the matter with me. I was just thinking."

"I suppose it's none of my business what you were thinking about, eh?"

"I was wondering if any poor fellows came ashore in that boat, that's all."

"Oh! If they did, I'm afraid they went to the bottom."

Gip didn't answer, but turned his attention to the sea.

While thus engaged he heard a wild cry from his chum, who had gone on ahead.

Turning quickly, he saw Dick bending down among the rocks.

He rushed to his side.

"Look! Look!" cried Dick, in a heartbroken voice, as with a white face he pointed to a crevice in the rocks.

Gip looked and saw what had wrung that outcry from his chum's lips.

A ship's life-preserver stared him in the face, and painted upon the flat rim were the words: "Granite State, Boston."

CHAPTER IV.

DICK LEARNS THE TRUTH AT LAST.

"Oh, Gip! Gip!" cried Dick, bursting into tears. "The Granite State—my father's ship—do you think she is lost? And my father, too? Oh, what shall I do?"

"Don't give way, Dick," said his chum, sympathetically. "That's not the best evidence in the world. Some poor fellow may have fallen overboard and that life-preserver was thrown to him."

"Do you think so, Gip?" exclaimed Dick, looking up, with a gleam of hope in his eyes. "Do you really think so?"

But Gip Calder did not really think so, though he pretended that he did.

If he had not seen the wreck of the gig with the ship's name on it he might have had strong doubts on the subject.

"No, no, Gip!" cried Dick, presently, as his eyes rested on many evidences of a marine disaster, which he could see strewn at haphazard about the rocks. "A vessel must have been wrecked on these rocks last night. We passed a big spar and part of a ship's boat, and, look yonder, all along there. More spars and cordage and bits of cargo. Oh, God, my dream! It has come to pass. The Granite State is lost, and I shall never see my father any more."

The poor boy wept bitterly.

"But you dreamed that your father was saved, didn't you?"

"Yes, yes—by the new lightkeeper. But we've been at the light, and no one knows even of the wreck there."

"Surely Martin must have seen this wreckage from the lantern," replied Gip. "Come, we will go back and see my father, and tell him what we have seen."

He led Dick back to the lighthouse and into the presence of Caleb Calder, who was still unable to do more than limp about.

"Father," said Gip, "did you know there was a wreck on the reef last night?"

"A wreck on the reef!" ejaculated the head keeper, in a startled tone. "You don't mean it!"

"I do. There are a dozen evidences of such a thing, and Dick here thinks it was his father's ship, the Granite State, which was lost."

"Why?"

"Because he found a life-preserver with her name on it, and I saw the name on a broken boat——"

He stopped suddenly, for he had unconsciously let slip what he had not meant should pass his lips before his chum.

But the damage was done, for Dick caught his words, turned white and looked as if he was going to fall.

"Oh, Gip!" he cried. "You saw her name on that boat and you would not tell me."

"Well, what was the use of telling you? It would only have made you feel bad. Besides, the boat might have been washed overboard in the gale, mightn't it, father?"

"Such things often happen," agreed old man Calder, who saw how matters stood.

"But the life-preserver, and the spars, and other wreckage! No, no; I dreamed she was lost, and my dream has come true!" cried Dick, in a paroxysm of grief.

"Don't jump to a conclusion too quick, my lad," said Caleb, soothingly. "Your father's vessel is not the only one sailing these seas. What did you say was the name of his ship?"

"The Granite State."

"And is she due in this neighborhood?"

"Yes, sir."

"How can you tell that to a certainty?"

"I received a letter from father, three days ago, and he said his vessel ought to arrive in Boston during the first week in May."

"And you say a life-preserver and a boat with her name on them came ashore on these rocks?"

Both boys nodded.

Caleb privately thought the matter looked serious, but he did not say so.

"Strange that Martin made no mention of having seen any wreckage about the light," he said, thoughtfully. "He's up in the gallery, isn't he?"

"Yes, father—cleaning the lamps," answered Gip.

"Run up and tell him I want to see him."

Gip sped away upstairs on his errand.

In a few minutes he returned and soon after Martin came slowly and reluctantly down to the living-room.

"There was a wreck on the reef last night, Martin," said Caleb. "Do you know anything about it?"

"Who says there was?" demanded the assistant keeper, hoarsely.

"These boys have seen lots of evidence on the rocks. I've noticed you've been outside several times this morning. How is it that you did not report the matter to me?"

"I haven't seen anything," replied Martin, doggedly.

"Why, there's a big spar not a dozen feet away from the door," said Gip. "You ought to have seen that."

Martin favored him with an ugly look.

"Well, I didn't see it," he replied, angrily.

"Didn't you look out from the lantern?" persisted Gip.

"No, I didn't."

"Was there a fog last night, Martin?"

"A dense fog, father," put in his son, quickly.

"Did you keep the horn going?" asked Caleb, looking fixedly at his assistant.

"I did," replied the man, surlily.

"I see you had a blanket down here. Did you go to sleep without waking me?" severely.

"No, I didn't."

"But the blanket?"

"I brought it down because I was cold."

"Cold!" cried Caleb, in surprise. "Why, that stove keeps the room as warm as toast."

Martin chafed under this cross-examination, and looked as black as a thunder-gust.

"You didn't hear anything during the night that would lead you to suppose a vessel went ashore on these rocks?"

"No."

"Well, the matter is bound to be investigated as soon as word gets around that a craft was wrecked on the Manacles. You are sure nothing went wrong with the light all night? It was your duty to watch it."

"The light was all right and the horn was all right. If any vessel came ashore it wasn't our fault. The fog was the thickest I ever saw."

"That is all, Martin. You may expect to be re-examined by the inspector in due time."

Caleb Calder wrote out a report of the circumstances and bade his son take it ashore and mail it to the chief inspector of that district.

As there was nothing more to detain them on the Manacles, they put off for the Cape.

When half way to shore, Gip noticed something bobbing about in the water.

"Take the boat-hook and pick that up," he said to his companion, who had been sitting silent and distressed ever since they left the light.

Dick did so.

The flotsam proved to be a fine pea-jacket.

From one of the inside pockets Gip pulled a small packet of letters.

Dick, looking over his shoulder, gave a cry of renewed grief.

"Those are my letters to father," and he grabbed them out of his chum's fingers. "This must be father's coat. He is dead! I know now he is surely dead."

He gave away to a paroxysm of grief.

Gip watched him in silent compassion.

There was nothing he could do to comfort his friend, for further examination of the jacket proved beyond a doubt that the article had been the property of Captain George Porter.

Gip was glad when the sailboat finally made her landing, and they stepped on shore.

As they approached the village they noticed a crowd around a ship chandlery store.

"I wonder what's going on here?" said Gip, with boyish curiosity.

Dick felt too downcast to have any curiosity on the subject.

"I don't think I remember many worse storms than that of last night, Gip heard a big seafaring man remark on the edge of the crowd.

"That's right, Jacobs," answered the man beside him. "There'll be many a widow and orphan that'll have cause to remember it."

"I know one who will," said a third man.

"You mean——"

"Hush!" said the other, gripping his arm. "Here he comes now."

Several of the men turned around and looked at Dick.

"He's heard the news," whispered Jacobs. "Look at his face."

"What's going on inside?" asked Gip at this moment

"Why, don't you know?" asked Jacobs, in some surprise.

"No, or I shouldn't have asked you."

"And doesn't he know, either?" whispering hoarsely in Gip's ear.

"Know what?"

The men looked awkward and their eyes twinkled strangely.

"Come here!" cried Jacobs, dragging Gip aside. "Cap'n Porter's body was found along the shore this morning, and they've brought it in here."

For a moment you might have knocked Gip down with a feather.

"Is that a fact?" he asked, with a lump in his throat.

"It is," replied Jacobs, solemnly.

"Poor Dick. This will be the last straw."

"Doesn't he know?" asked the seaman. "I thought by his face——"

"He more than suspects," replied Gip. "We've just come from the Manacles, where we've seen evidences of the wreck of Cap'n Porter's ship—a life-preserver and a boat from the Granite State, and any amount of wreckage. Then, on the way across, we picked the cap'n's pea-jacket out of the water."

"That's a strange part of it. The cap'n came ashore stark naked."

"He did?"

"Yes. It doesn't seem natural, for his body has scarcely a bruise, which shows he couldn't have been tossed upon the rocks."

"I haven't the heart to break the news to Dick," said Gip.

"He'll have to be told sooner or later. He might as well know it now."

So Jacobs undertook the delicate office, and a few minutes later Dick, convulsed with grief, was kneeling beside his dead father's body.

Everybody in the little village of Southold knew Dick, and most of them had known Captain Porter, who, eighteen years before, when second mate of the bark Cohasset, had wooed and won pretty Nellie Wentworth, daughter of old John Wentworth, a coast pilot, since dead and gone to his last rest in the churchyard, consequently every one did all they could to console the manly young lad for the great loss he had sustained.

Three days later they gathered solemnly around a grave dug beside that of the captain's wife, and watched the coffin as it was lowered, and the sods as they were heaped in upon it when the last prayer had been said by the minister.

And when the mound had been raised and the sexton's

assistant drew away, Dick threw himself upon it, and, choking with grief, remained till long after the last of the onlookers had departed for their homes.

CHAPTER VI

SHANGHAIED.

"So you're really going to leave the village, Dick?" asked Gip Calder, a few days after the funeral of Captain Porter.

Dick had been stopping with the Calders since the day of the funeral.

"Yes. The loss of the Granite State and my father's death has cast me adrift on the world, and I must do something to earn my own living now."

"But I thought your father was fairly well off?"

"He was, but whatever he had went down in the ship."

"But if he owned an interest in the ship the insurance——"

"He did not own an interest in the vessel. Whatever money he had he took to Australia for the purpose of making an investment in certain goods he intended to introduce into this country."

"Well, did he?"

"He did."

"Then, surely, the goods were insured."

"I have no evidence of the fact."

"You ought to write to or see the owners of the Granite State. Perhaps they can tell you something."

"I mean to call on them. I am going to start for Boston to-morrow morning."

"So soon as that?" asked Gip, who felt awful sorry to part from his chum.

"Yes. No good can come of delay. I've got to face the world, and I might as well begin at once."

"What do you think of doing?"

"I don't know," replied Dick. "Circumstances will have to decide the matter."

"Well, you'll write to me, old man, won't you?"

"Write to you, Gip? Why, of course I will. And you'll let me hear from you, too."

"Well, I guess. We're not going back on each other, even if you are in Boston and I'm on Cape Cod."

"That's right. We've been chums for years, and chums we'll remain, I hope, as long as we live."

The two boys clasped hands and swore everlasting friendship.

Next morning Dick left Southold for Boston, followed by the good wishes of all in the village, and as he stepped aboard the train which was to carry him to North Harwich, where he was to connect with the main line for the capital of the State, he little dreamed of the thrilling adventures through which he was fated to pass ere his eyes again lighted upon his native village by the sea.

On his arrival in Boston, Dick Porter repaired at once

to a lodging-house to which he had been recommended by a storekeeper in Southold, and left his trunk.

He took dinner at a nearby restaurant and then set out for the offices of Capstan & Flint, ship owners and merchants, to whom the unfortunate Granite State had belonged.

The loss of the ship had already been confirmed, and they had notified the marine insurance company in which they held policies on ship and a part of the cargo.

Mr. Capstan received Dick in his private office and politely expressed to the boy the regrets of the firm that so excellent a master as Captain Porter had been lost with his ship.

"It is a sad commentary on life to think that the Granite State, after weathering the perils of a long voyage from Australia, should be lost, with all hands, almost in sight of her port of destination," remarked the shipowner.

Mr. Capstan said he would pay over to Dick the amount the firm owed his father for services rendered to date.

Then the boy asked him if he knew anything about a portion of the cargo in which his father had written him that he had an interest.

Yes, Mr. Capstan knew about it, as it was written down in the manifest, which had been forwarded by mail before the ship left Melbourne.

Then Dick wished to know if it had been insured.

No, unfortunately, it had not—the Granite State had been a lucky ship up to the moment she had met her fate on the Manacle Reef, and Captain Porter did not think it necessary to insure his venture.

"It was a grave mistake, and hits you hard, Master Porter, but we all make mistakes one time or another, and your father was not an exception to the rule. If we can do anything for you, for the sake of your father, you may command us."

Dick thanked him and, after receiving the money due his father, took his leave.

Next morning he put the money in a savings bank, and then started out to hunt for employment.

He was not successful in getting anything to do such as he felt he would like to turn his hand to.

The second day was like the first, the third like the second, and finally a full week elapsed and still Dick tramped the streets of Boston looking for a position that, like the will-o'-the-wisp, always evaded him.

On the afternoon of the eighth day since his arrival in the city, Dick, tired and a bit dispirited, found himself in the neighborhood of the docks.

A whiff of the sea breeze blowing up the harbor, recalled thoughts of Southold and the seafaring men of that old village, and for the first time the boy experienced a feeling of home-sickness.

Mechanically he walked down on one of the wharves, and finally sat upon a stringpiece close by a big British ship that was unloading chests of tea.

She had only hauled into the dock the day before, and she still had about her all the flavor of a long trip from the Orient, across some thousands of miles of salty seas.

Dick had been watching the stevedores at their work for perhaps a good twenty minutes, when a tall, gaunt man of the seafaring type, whose skin was tanned the color of dark leather, edged toward him, and after looking the boy over with his black, beady eyes, suddenly addressed him.

"Want to go to sea, my lad, on one of the best ships that ever left Boston harbor? She's the William Penn, Cap'n Obediah Simpson, and as stanch a craft as ever floated. Bound for China ports with a mixed cargo, and 'll bring ye back with a load of tea like what ye are lookin' at."

"I'm not going to sea," answered Dick, drawing back, for he did not like the looks of the man much. "I'm looking for work on land."

"Ye are throwin' yourself away," said the man with the beady eyes, with a gesture that meant a great deal. "Why, ye are cut out for a sailor, I can see that with half an eye. Better ship, my lad, in the William Penn. It's a chance that don't come to every lad, not by a long shot."

"I don't care to be a sailor," replied Dick, in a decided tone, turning away and walking down to the end of the wharf to watch a gang of men warp another craft into her berth.

The man with the beady eyes kept him in sight, however, and presently made a signal to a pal, who was lounging on the opposite side of the dock.

The fellow joined him, and the party who had addressed Dick pointed the boy out to the other man, and then the pair sauntered down the wharf after Dick.

They kept aloof in the background while the boy was watching the docking of the vessel with interested eyes, and they followed him when he went up the wharf toward the street.

Dick was feeling not only tired but very hungry.

He was a considerable distance from his lodgings, so when he saw a restaurant at the head of the wharf he decided to have his supper before going any further.

The beady eyes of the seafaring man twinkled with satisfaction when he noticed Dick enter the eating-house.

He held a conference with his companion, and presently that individual entered the restaurant and stopped at the small counter near the door, behind which stood a short, thick-set and unpleasant-featured man, who appeared to be the proprietor.

The men nodded to each other, as if acquainted, and then engaged in a low conversation, during which the fellow who had come in furtively pointed out Dick Porter to the restaurant man.

Some agreement was reached between them, and the friend of the beady-eyed man left the place and joined his companion outside, the two going off somewhere together.

The proprietor of the restaurant drew the coffee that was furnished to the customers, the urn being at the corner of the counter, and on this occasion he took a particular interest in the cup of cheap Mocha and Java he sent by a waiter to the boy.

Dick had ordered a steak, fried potatoes, rice pudding and coffee, and when the meal was served to him he found the quantity all right, but the quality much below the

average; but to a hungry boy, after a day of tramping, it tasted sweet and appetizing, and he cleaned the plates.

After he had finished he took up an evening paper the waiter brought him and began to read.

The words soon began to dance before his eyes, his eyelids seemed heavy, and the benumbing sense of sleep stole over him.

He tried to arouse himself, wondering what was the matter, but found it impossible to throw off the stupor.

He rose to leave the place, but his eyelids seemed determined to close in spite of his most determined efforts to keep them open.

The power of feeling, and all sensation, seemed to desert him, and he fell back in his chair, unconscious.

The proprietor, who had kept his eyes on him at intervals, came down the narrow room and shook him, asking him what was the matter, and, getting no response, appeared for a moment undecided what to do with him.

This by-play was evidently for the benefit of the few customers in the place.

Finally he called his two waiters and ordered them to carry the boy to a cot in the basement until he recovered his senses.

That closed the incident, apparently.

Darkness came on, the hours passed slowly away and Dick slept on, a dull, sluggish sleep, in the basement under the restaurant.

The proprietor visited him about ten o'clock, and again at midnight, and each time found him in the same condition, which circumstance seemed to afford him no surprise.

About one o'clock a cheap cab stopped in front of the restaurant door, for it was an all-night establishment, and the man with the beady eyes and his companion got out and entered the eating-house.

They had a brief conversation with the proprietor, some money was passed to him and then all three went to the cellar, where Dick still lay, unconscious.

The boy was carried to the cab outside by the crimp and his associate, and the party drove off to a boat-landing, not very far away.

Dick Porter was deposited in the boat, the cab dismissed, and then the two men took up the oars and pushed out from the wharf into the bay.

CHAPTER VI.

ON BOARD THE WILLIAM PENN.

It was still early in the morning, the 15th of May, that the full-rigged ship William Penn passed out of Boston harbor, past the lighthouse, and with all sails spread to a lively breeze, laid her course southeasterly toward the Cape Verde Islands on the long route past Ascension, past St. Helena, to the Cape of Good Hope.

As the first streaks of dawn were seen in the east, two men came down in the fore-castle.

The first was the chief mate and the other was the second mate.

They came down to arouse three or four of the crew who had been brought aboard in a helpless condition.

They stepped up to one of the bunks and seizing the occupant by the shoulder, shook him roughly.

"Hello!" exclaimed the first mate. "This is one of our old hands, Bob Rafter, and as dead as a log yet."

"Yes," replied his companion, with a chuckle, "and if he knows when he's well off he'll stay that way as long as he can."

The two officers let the man lie and proceeded to the next, whom they found partly conscious.

They yanked him out of the bunk and ordered him on deck.

The man pulled himself together and staggered up the ladder.

The third man they treated after the same fashion, and then came to the last, who proved to be a good-looking, curly-headed boy, who looked rather out of place in that evil-smelling hole.

"Who's this?" asked the chief mate, pulling the blankets off the boy, who lay all huddled up in his shore togs, just as he had been bundled into the bunk.

"This is a young chap whom Dan McCrasy, the crimp, shipped as an ordinary seaman, but he looks as if he didn't know a marlin spike from the spanker boom."

"A greenhorn, eh?" replied the first mate, with an unpleasant laugh. "Well, he's brought his pigs to a fine market. I pity him, upon my word. If the cap'n doesn't haze him it'll be because he's changed since last voyage. Let him lie a spell."

"He's coming to his senses. Better rouse him up," and the speaker shook the boy in no gentle way.

The lad opened his eyes and looked about him in a dazed way.

"Where am I?" he asked, wonderingly, as he sat up.

"Where are you, you young sea-cook? Why, aboard the William Penn, bound for the Cape and Calcutta."

"Aboard the William Penn?" gasped Dick Porter, for it was indeed our hero who had been thus unceremoniously aroused to the realities of a new and undesirable experience.

"Aye, you lubber. And now that you're awake just tumble up on deck in short order."

"But I don't understand——" began the bewildered boy.

"Who cares whether you understand or not!" cried the chief mate, with an oath, giving the lad a cuff that stretched him upon the floor. "Get on deck or I'll take a rope's end to you, d'ye hear?"

Dick, hardly knowing whether all this was a dream or the grim reality, hastened to get out of the reach of the brutal mate, and the only way he could do this was to climb up the ladder.

"Now, then, look alive!" said the second mate, who had followed him up. "Take hold of that swab and help wash down deck."

He gave the boy a shove toward one of the articles in

question, and Dick fell up against a seaman who held a hose in his hand.

Fortunately for Dick this man was a decent sort of sailor.

He saw right away that the boy was a greenhorn, and felt sorry for him.

"Take off your shoes and stockings, my lad, and roll up your trousers, then take hold and do as the others are doing," he said, in a low tone.

Dick, realizing that the easiest way was the best under the circumstances, though he could not understand how he came to be aboard of the ship, obeyed, and was soon industriously engaged hauling the flat, holy stone about on the vessel's deck.

As soon as the deck was washed down the captain stepped to the break of the poop and in a stentorian voice ordered the men aft.

Dick followed with the rest, and he soon had an opportunity to judge what sort of a man the master of the William Penn was.

"Look here, you fellows, I'm a man of few words, but what I say is always to the p'int. We've shipped together for a long v'yage, and whether or not it's to be a pleasant one depends entirely upon yourselves. Obey is the word with me, without black looks or any hanging back. If you don't understand me you will, every mother's son of you, before you're forty-eight hours older. This gentleman," pointing to his chief officer, "Mr. Brill, is my first mate, and that one there, Mr. Lampe, is my second mate. I'm the cap'n, and when you've taken a good look at me, go for'd. Mr. Brill, divide them into watches."

After that ceremony had been gone through with, breakfast was served to the crew.

The sailor who had spoken to Dick, and whose name was Joe Fowler, took the boy under his wing and asked him how he came to ship before the mast on the William Penn.

Dick declared he was ignorant of having done so.

"The last thing I remember was eating supper in a restaurant at the head of one of the Boston docks."

"It's clear you must have been hocussed. You've been shanghai'd, my lad, and I'm sorry for you. What's your name?"

"Dick Porter. My father was captain of the Granite State, and was lost with his ship on the Manacles, nearly two weeks ago."

"You're havin' hard luck so early in life. You'll have to make the best of it. You can't expect any redress, for nobody cares for a sailor."

"But I don't know much about a ship. I can be of very little use here," protested Dick.

"You'll learn, and the best way to do it is to take hold lively and show that you're willin', otherwise it will be beaten into you. Take my advice, my lad, say nothin' and saw wood. I'll help you all I can. The cap'n of this vessel doesn't stand any foolin'. His name is Simpson, and his reputation with the men ain't none of the best. He's got the eye of a hawk, and would just as soon shy a be-

layin' pin at your head as look at you. Keep shy of him, for he has no stomach for a greeny."

Later on the second mate took Dick in hand and rigged him out from the slop-chest; that is, furnished him with a kit of sailor clothing, which included bedding for his bunk and other articles necessary to a sailor.

The experience that Dick Porter entered on at this time was a hard and bitter one, and he soon learned some of the dreadful hardships of a sailor's life.

Before long the crew began to regard Captain Simpson with mortal terror.

His whole aim seemed to be to make life miserable for them.

The decks had to be scrubbed down each day, and every piece of metal had to be scoured and polished till it shone.

None of the sailors were at ease, on watch or off.

They were always expecting to see the captain come striding forward with useless orders and curses on his lips.

The favoring wind enabled the vessel to hold on her steady, southeast course, and she soon entered the low latitudes, where the air was warm, and the summer seemed to have come in spring.

The William Penn was unusually fortunate, for when she reached the tropics she caught a slant of wind which carried her over the line and clear into the trade winds, and she thenceforward had a smart run of it to Cape Town, where the captain put in for twenty-four hours.

From the Cape of Good Hope she laid her course east and then north by east, to run through the Mozambique Channel, which lies between the eastern coast of Africa and the island of Madagascar.

She ran into a terrible storm 200 miles or so south of the island and was driven well out into the Indian Ocean.

As soon as the captain was able to ascertain his position, he headed almost due north toward Calcutta.

The disarrangement of his plans, coupled with unavoidable loss of time, which the storm had brought about, made the skipper's disposition more crooked than ever before.

He took to drinking heavily, and when he came upon deck he found fault with everything and everybody, from the chief mate down to Dick Porter, who led a dog's life of it, and could scarcely call his soul his own.

One particular habit of the captain was peeking and prying about at all times of the day and night, to try and catch his people off their guard, and when he was successful at this game there was something doing all right.

Of course, it's the rule that the master of the ship does not come forward at all, unless there's some great trouble, the mates manage that part of the ship; but Captain Simpson made a practice of continually breaking this rule.

One morning Dick and Joe Fowler, who had taken a great liking to the bright lad, and was fast putting him wise to all the points of seamanship that came within his line of duty, were talking together in the waist of the ship.

A short time before the man who had been relieved at the wheel had come forward and reported that the captain had gone below, three-quarters drunk.

Fowler, believing the master was good for an hour at

least in the cabin, had taken advantage of the circumstance, and of the fact that the second mate who was on duty was busily employed on the poop, to stop Dick and have a few minutes' talk with him.

The boy was only too glad to listen to him.

"Take him for all in all, Cap'n Simpson is the worse man I ever sailed under," said Fowler, after they had been conversing about ten minutes, without noticing what was going on around them. "It's a horrible life he's givin' us, and I wish I mightn't see him again all the voyage."

At that moment the speaker, happening to cast his eyes around, saw the captain standing in the shadow of the foremast, and he uttered an involuntary cry of alarm.

Dick looked up and saw the captain, too.

A chill came over him, for the master, grasping a hand-spike, was glowering upon them like a fiend, and savagely enjoying the anticipation of the trouble that was about to follow.

CHAPTER VII

CAST ADRIFT.

"Ah! I've caught you at it, have I?" snarled Captain Simpson. "Calling me names behind my back, are you, Fowler?"

"I didn't know, sir, that——" began the sailor, in some trepidation.

"Of course you didn't know I was about," with a nasty laugh. "Thought I was in the cabin, didn't you? But I'll fix you, my man, and that little monkey alongside you."

Dick, at first almost paralyzed with terror, concluded to get out of sight of the irate skipper before he shied the hand-spike at his head, as he was liable to do, and fled across the deck just as the captain rushed at them.

He paused a dozen feet away and looked back.

Fowler lay stretched out, motionless, upon the planks, a stream of blood flowing from his head, while the captain stood above him with the weapon in his hand with which he had felled the unfortunate seaman.

In another moment Captain Simpson walked away and entered his cabin, leaving three of the morning watch to look after the stricken man.

Dick ran back and lifted Fowler's head in his arms, for he had grown very fond of the man, whose kindness had been the only comfort he had enjoyed since he had been aboard the ship.

"How did it happen?" asked one of the sailors as the rest of the watch gathered about only just in time to see Fowler give a gasp and breathe his last.

"Look!" cried Dick, in a tone of combined sorrow and anger. "Look at the captain's work! He struck him with the hand-spike, and now he's dead!"

A death-like silence fell on the group as they gazed down on the dead man.

Perhaps they were asking themselves who would be the next victim of the master's brutality.

The body of Joe Fowler was carried to his bunk in the forecabin and covered up, and those of the watch below who were awake were told of the tragedy.

A feeling of gloom pervaded the ship forward of the mainmast, and the mates themselves were not altogether easy in their minds.

The general feeling among the sailors was that the fiend was let loose in Captain Simpson—the fiend of rum and wickedness, and none of their lives were safe.

The captain did not reappear on deck until after dinner had been served in the cabin.

Then he came out in the waist, and, after pacing the deck for several minutes, he suddenly gave orders to heave the vessel to.

This astonishing order was immediately obeyed, although no man could fathom the meaning of it.

The sky to the windward looked squally and threatening, but whether the weather conditions would develop a gale no one could say, as the barometer showed no tendency to drop.

The next order, to lower a boat and bring it around to the gangway, was even more mystifying than the other.

As soon as it had been carried out, Captain Simpson sent for the steward.

"Fetch a breaker of water and three days' cooked rations on deck," ordered the skipper.

The steward wonderingly obeyed the directions.

"Here you, Edwards," to a sailor, "put that stuff into the boat."

It was done.

"Where is that young scoundrel, Porter?" demanded the master, looking around.

Dick, who, with the rest of the crew, had been watching the singular proceedings, stepped forward.

"Oh, there you are, eh?" with a grin of malice. "I s'pose you thought I'd forgotten all about you?" His face was now ablaze with passion, and disfigured with streaks of brandy. "I'll teach you to talk about me, you young scoundrel!" he cried, with a volley of profanity. "I made an example of Fowler, and I'm going to make another of you! We'll find out who's captain!"

Dick looked at the captain with a strange sensation of dismay.

What punishment was about to be dealt out to him?

He was not kept long in doubt.

"Now, you mutinous young dog!" exclaimed Captain Simpson, pointing at the open sea. "Down with you into that boat!"

"You can't mean to send me adrift in that cockleshell, with a storm coming up!" cried Dick, aghast at the prospect.

"Down with you, d'ye hear! Or I'll serve you as I did Fowler awhile back. Down with you, and don't let me hear another word out of you!"

The boy looked around into the faces of his shipmates, but not one made a move to interfere in his behalf.

He turned to the chief mate, who stood near, but the man's face was cold and impenetrable.

"Are you going?" roared the skipper, furiously, making a move as if he meant to strike the boy.

"May heaven forgive you and save me!" said Dick, looking him full in the face. "Good-by, all of you!" waving his hand to the men, who seemed at last to be waking up to the cruelty of the situation. "Remember this day when you reach Calcutta."

He turned to the gangway, slid down the rope ladder which hung over the boat, and as the captain cast off the rope which held the frail craft to the ship, he sat down in the sternsheets and watched the distance gradually widen between himself and the William Penn.

Then came the creaking of ropes and pulleys as the yards were braced around once more, and the sail catching the wind the big ship drew away from him, leaving him alone and helpless upon the heaving bosom of the wide Indian Ocean.

CHAPTER VIII.

AUSTRALIA.

Dick Porter gazed after the receding ship until his eye-balls ached.

Then he looked to the windward and noted with some relief that the dark look in the heavens in that direction appeared to be passing away to the south.

The little boat rose and fell on the long, heavy swell of the ocean.

He noted the oars in the boat with no satisfaction.

Of what use were they to him, hundreds of miles away from the nearest land?

When he turned his eyes again on the William Penn she was scarcely more than a speck on the horizon.

"I'm afraid this is my finish," thought Dick, mournfully. "My only show is that some vessel will come this way close enough to make me out. I'm a pretty small object to be seen by eyes not on the lookout for such a speck as I. It is a mere matter of luck, with the chances all against me. Well, what's the use of kicking? I'm up against it hard, and that's all there is to it."

He covered his head with a bit of sail from the heat of the scorching, tropical sun, and by degrees dozed off to sleep, letting the boat take its course.

It was four in the afternoon when he awoke again to the realization of his terrible situation.

His mouth was dry and parched, and the first thing he did was to uncork the breaker and take a drink of water.

Then he looked around him rather indifferently, for he did not expect to see anything afloat on this wild waste of ocean.

An object in the near distance, however, suddenly attracted his earnest notice.

One long look and then he gave a shout of joy.

A big ship, under all sail, was bearing directly down upon him, and she was now scarcely more than a mile away.

He watched her approach, with fascinated eyes and a thrill which penetrated his entire body.

At length she was so close that he felt sure that some one on board must soon notice him.

He jumped to his feet, shouted at the top of his voice and waved one of the oars in the air.

He was seen, for he saw the yards swing so as to bring the vessel to.

He seized his oars and began to row towards her with all his strength.

Looking over his shoulder as he drew near he saw a number of persons on the quarter deck, among whom were several ladies, gathered at the rail looking toward him.

He could also see the heads of some of the crew lining the bulwarks.

As he came up to the ship's side a rope was tossed to him, which he made fast to the bow of the boat and then, with the agility of a sailor, he went up the side, hand over hand, until he touched the gangway and stepped on deck, where he was greeted by the chief mate of the ship.

"You don't look as if you'd been long afloat, young man," said the mate, scanning him from top to toe.

"I haven't, thank goodness," replied Dick. "But if this ship hadn't come along just as she did, Lord knows what would have been the end of my cruise."

"Well, you can make your explanations to the cap'n, who's on the after-deck," said the officer. "Follow me."

And while he was making his way toward the group of interested people on the upper deck, the small boat was hoisted on board, the yards braced again to the wind, and the ship resumed her course to the southeast.

The mate having inquired his name, presented Dick to the captain.

He was a thick-set, hearty-looking Englishman, of a florid complexion, well tanned by exposure to the sun and weather—altogether a different kind of person from the skipper of the William Penn.

Dick's explanation of how he came to be placed in such a terrible situation was listened to by the captain and mate with indignation, and by the half a dozen passengers gathered about them with almost incredulous amazement.

Captain Simpson's conduct was regarded with horror and disgust, and the additional fact that the lad had been shanghaied from Boston and forced to undergo all the hardships of a greeny against his inclinations, enlisted the sympathy of the passengers particularly.

Dick was made welcome on board the vessel, which he found was the British ship *Saracen*, from London to Melbourne, via the Mediterranean and the Suez Canal.

In return, he offered to make himself generally useful on board until the ship arrived at her port of destination, and the captain accepted his services.

The passengers were Edward Gresham, wife and daughter Edith, a lovely little fair-haired miss of fifteen; George Hoskins, a civil engineer; Samuel Rowe, a commercial

agent, and wife; and Charles Wingford, who came out with the idea of going into sheep raising.

The manly young American created a favorable impression among them, and especially interested Miss Edith Gresham, whose grace and vivacity quite captivated the boy.

They sympathized with him in the recent loss of his father, and contributed a purse, in which the officers of the ship joined, in order that he might not be absolutely penniless when he arrived in a strange land so many thousands of miles away from his native country.

Dick was not sent forward to do duty before the mast, but bunked and ate with the boatswain, ship's carpenter and other subordinates, and his services were confined to waiting on the ship's officers and passengers.

Before the end of the first week Dick had become a great favorite in the cabin, and his society was monopolized by the passengers, the ladies especially, when he was not on duty.

He and Edith Gresham became great friends, and seemed never so happy as when in each other's company.

One morning a couple of weeks later, as the passengers were rising from the breakfast-table, the cry of "land ho!" rang out from the masthead, and the sound was a welcome one to all on board.

All in the cabin rushed up on deck, lining the lee rail to catch their first view of Australia.

And yet the cause of all this commotion was only a mere speck of white cliff, the breakers dashing against it, only to be observed by the aid of a powerful telescope; but then it was land at last—the evidence of the tedious voyage being over.

In an hour or two Dick joined his new friends on the deck and was instantly appropriated by Miss Edith.

They went to the rail to watch the distant shore, which was becoming each moment more perceptible to the naked eye.

The rugged rocks, the primeval forests stretching far away into the distance, grew into form beneath their gaze.

"And what shall you do, Dick, when you land in Melbourne?" asked Edith, with eager interest and a bit wistfully.

"I really don't know what I shall do, Miss Edith," he answered, laughingly.

"Then you haven't any plans at all?"

"Not a single one as yet."

"Then why don't you come into the country with us," she cried, eagerly. "Papa and mamma will be delighted to have you go along. Papa is going into the cattle-raising business, you know, and I am sure you would find lots to interest you in the bush, as it is called. I do so wish you would come," she said, earnestly.

"Do you really, Miss Edith?"

"Indeed I do. I wish you wouldn't always call me Miss Edith. Just call me Edith. It would seem ever so much more natural."

"Certainly, Miss—I mean, Edith, if you wish me to."

"I do wish you to. Miss is altogether too formal be-

tween old friends like us," and she burst into a merry peal of laughter.

The land seemed very near now, and the splendid bay of Port Philip, stretching for miles, was fully in sight.

"What is that lighthouse we've been in sight of for so many hours?" asked Edith of the chief mate, who was passing at the moment.

"That's the Williamstown lighthouse, Miss Edith," he answered. "That's Port Philip Head, yonder. We shall cast anchor presently. Here's the medical inspector coming aboard."

That functionary came alongside in due course, and, having examined the ship, proclaimed it fit to pass.

Another important official, namely, the pilot, also came on board, and the captain turned the ship over to him.

As the vessel slowly drifted up the bay, signs of life and civilization were shown by the population and growing towns on either side.

"That place is what we call New Brighton," Dick and Edith heard the captain say to the group of interested passengers; "and over there you can see Melbourne."

The ship cast anchor among the glorious scenery of Hobson's Bay, with its thickly wooded sides, extending to the picturesque ranges of mountains beyond.

On all sides were shipping in great abundance.

All was now activity among the passengers and crew, preparing to go ashore.

Dick Porter, and his new friends, the Greshams, were among the first to board the little steamer which came alongside to take them into the city.

"You must come with us to the hotel, Dick," said Mr. Gresham, who had taken a great liking for the young American. "You must consider yourself our guest while we remain in the city. Edith insists on that, so I hope you won't think of refusing."

As Edith added her persuasions to her father's invitation, Dick yielded gracefully, for he was more than pleased to continue the young lady's acquaintance.

CHAPTER IX.

JOURNEYING INTO THE WILDERNESS.

On arriving at Melbourne, Dick and the Saracen's passengers felt like people just set down in a new and strange world.

The wide and regular streets, the fine shops, the motley conglomeration of people of every nation, Europeans, Chinese, Maories and natives, the brilliancy of the climate and the entire novelty apparent in everything, bewildered and at the same time charmed them.

The Greshams went to a first-class hotel, and, of course, Dick went with them.

As the boy naturally felt embarrassed in his sailor attire, the first thing Mr. Gresham did after they were allotted

rooms was to take Dick to a clothing store and fit him out completely, from hat to shoes.

Dick wanted to foot the bill himself from the fund which had been presented to him on board the Saracen, but his generous friend would not listen to him.

"I can well afford this little expenditure, my boy, and I present it to you as a slight testimonial of my appreciation of your kindness and attention to my daughter during the short time you were aboard the Saracen."

"I am sure I am very much obliged to you, sir," replied the boy, gratefully.

"Don't mention it. To tell you the truth, I have taken a fancy to you, my lad, and I hope you will decide to go with us to our new home, up the country."

"Well, I have no objection to that, if it will offer me an opportunity to get ahead in life."

"To a bright and wide-awake youth like you," said Mr. Gresham, "there is every chance for you to work your way to fortune."

"Then I will go with you," replied Dick, promptly.

"I am delighted to hear you say so. You will be a companion for Edith, and I am bound to say she seems to be greatly interested in you."

After dinner that evening Hoskins and Wingford called at the hotel and induced Dick to go out with them and see some of the sights of the town.

Among other places, they dropped in at one of the numerous drinking saloons.

Here, standing around the bar partaking of "nobbles," or glasses of liquor, and gambling at the tables in an inner room, were many rough-looking persons, principally diggers from the mountains, with wealth in the pockets little in accordance with their shabby appearance.

There was one hilarious party at a table in a corner which attracted Dick's attention as he looked curiously about the room.

The individual who seemed to be making his presence felt in that part of the saloon was a herculean, desperate-looking chap, with great, unkempt, bushy whiskers, and skin as brown as a berry.

Dick did not fancy his looks for a cent, and was about to call Wingford's attention to him, when the fellow got up, in a half-inebriated way, and slapping a big, broad-shouldered man on the shoulders, whose back was turned to the boy, said something in a loud voice.

Thereupon the others rose, like a flock of disturbed birds, and started to leave the place.

Then it was that Dick got a good look at the man who had been so familiarly addressed by the six-foot ruffian, and he started back with a gasp of astonishment.

He recognized the well-known features of Edward Martin, the assistant keeper of the Manacle Light.

At the same moment Martin's gaze lighted upon the boy, and he started back with an oath, while his face turned a deathly white, as if an accusing ghost had suddenly arisen before his eyes.

"What's the matter with you, Ned?" asked one of his companions.

"Nothing," growled Martin, surlily, backing away, and taking a roundabout course, followed his associates from the saloon.

Ned Martin was the last person Dick would have expected to meet in Melbourne, and the boy wondered greatly what had brought him to the antipodes.

It is true he knew that Martin had thrown up his job at the lighthouse on the afternoon following the gale which had wrecked the Granite State on the Manacle Reef, and that the man had disappeared without applying for the pay due him, but he did not dream that the fellow had left the United States.

"Well," thought Dick, as he followed Hoskins and Wingford out into the lighted street, "his presence here has nothing to do with me. I shall probably never see him again."

And with that reflection he dismissed the ex-lightkeeper from his mind.

But if he had only known that Martin carried in his pocket at that moment the wallet he had stolen from Captain George Porter, and which contained the "fortune" the captain meant should eventually come to his son, and further, that this man was responsible for his father's death, Dick wouldn't have so readily decided that Martin's presence in Australia had nothing to do with him.

Two weeks after the arrival of the Saracen in Melbourne, Mr. Gresham completed his preparations to go up country to the locality where he designed to fix his residence.

He bought quite a head of cattle to take with him, and accompanied by his wife, Edith, Dick and Wingford, joined other parties bent on a similar errand, and started out on the journey into the interior.

They soon found themselves in a wild and strange region.

Around them lay a country that seemed absolutely boundless.

Ridge after ridge of dark-blue gum trees arose in the distance.

Brilliant flowers and luxuriant grass and shrubs, all of a species totally unlike anything Dick had ever seen before.

Locusts chattered in the trees, mosquitoes flitted in the air, and birds of gorgeous plumage screamed and twittered on every bough of the vast extent of woodland that stretched away down to the banks of the wide river which, like the whole landscape, glittered in the rays of the scorching Australian sun.

"Isn't it glorious!" exclaimed Edith, as Dick rejoined her, after a spirited pursuit of some of the cattle which had strayed from the convoy.

To round up and drive a refractory bull, cowboy fashion, furnished the boy with excitement and amusement to burn.

"It's a fine country all right," replied Dick. "That is all, but——"

"All but what?" she asked, in some surprise.

"All but the bushrangers. I've heard they're worse than the bad men out West in my own country."

"Do you think we may meet any of those persons?" asked Edith, turning pale, for she had heard her father

and some of the men of the party talking about this lawless Australian element.

"I hope not, Edith," replied Dick, seriously.

"Where are we now?" she inquired. "Do you know?"

"About a day's journey from the nearest town."

"You mean from Palgrave, where we stopped yesterday?"

"Yes."

"And shall we come to another town soon?"

"I guess not. About the only signs of civilization out this way are stations or squatters' settlements."

"Papa said we were going to settle close to a station."

"So I heard him say, and not many miles from a police station, so I guess we will be protected from the bushrangers."

"I hope so," replied the pretty miss, nervously.

"Don't worry, I'll look out for you," grinned Dick.

"Thank you. I'm sure you will," she replied, casting a bewitching look at the boy that caused his heart to beat a bit faster.

It was coming on evening now, and so Dick and Edith, who were riding somewhat in advance of the main party, fell back and joined the others, just as Mr. Kent, an experienced squatter, who was acting as guide, rode up and suggested that they encamp for the night.

"We are coming now to a stream that runs into the Dugong River yonder," he said. "Night isn't far off, and we can't make much further progress to-day. So let's unyoke and prepare the evening meal."

Having selected their camping place, the men unyoked the cattle and lit the fire, while the women prepared the food for their al fresco meal, which, after the fatiguing day's journey, all were ready for.

After supper, as the men reclined about on the turf, smoking their pipes, the conversation became general.

Somebody remarked that he had heard in Palgrave that the bushrangers were becoming active again in that part of the country.

"There's a new gang that's giving the police a good deal of trouble," he said. "A big, strapping giant of a fellow, named McTurk, is the leader of this crowd, and they say he and his men are a fierce proposition."

"I was warned about him," replied Mr. Kent. "And told to keep a sharp lookout for those chaps, whether we're on the march or in our cattle runs at home."

Dick, who was an interested listener, recalled at once the herculean fellow he had seen in the Melbourne saloon, and with whom Ned Martin appeared to be on familiar terms.

"Gee whiz!" thought the boy. "If this McTurk is any bigger or worse-looking than that chap I don't want to meet him even in a crowd."

"He's a ticklish customer, I judge," said the first speaker again. "And I shouldn't want to come across him unless it was in a position where I had the advantage. His last feat was plundering and burning old Quimby's clearing down near Ongong Creek. I'll tell you about that."

But he didn't, for at that moment one of the men who had been deputed to watch ran up and said there were a lot of people coming up from the river.

CHAPTER X.

IN THE WILDS OF THE MOUNTAIN RANGE.

The men all jumped up at once and got their guns, while the ladies exhibited every evidence of alarm.

The approaching party, however, turned out to be a band of natives, peaceably disposed, but noted as expert thieves, ready to lay their hands on anything if not carefully watched.

They crowded around the campfire, asking for all kinds of gifts.

Mr. Kent, who was acquainted with their character and methods, succeeded in getting rid of them with a few comparatively worthless trinkets, and a couple of bottles of rum, after which the travelers turned in and slept until morning without being further disturbed.

The party resumed their journey after breakfast, and several days later reached the station where the Greshams, Wingford and several others had hit upon for their permanent settlement.

The others went on further to the north.

From this moment Dick began a new life in the wilds of Australia as a cattle herder, but with the ultimate purpose of becoming a stock raiser himself in time.

The free and healthful employment he now followed was just to his liking.

As the weeks passed he soon became an expert horseman.

Time and again he was sent in pursuit of fugitive cattle, as he was regarded as the best and swiftest rider on the station.

When not otherwise engaged, his evenings were spent in Edith's society, and the friendship between the young people grew closer as time passed.

One morning Charles Wingford, who had gone in partnership with Mr. Gresham in the cattle business instead of taking to sheep raising as had been his original intention, rushed up to Dick and said:

"The two blood steers are off, Dick. It's up to you to get them back."

"How's that?" asked the boy. "They were all right last night when Davis went on duty."

"I can't say how it is. All I know is they're off for fair. Get some food together and see if you can round them up."

"All right, sir," replied Dick, cheerfully.

The chase promised to be exciting, for the steers were young and fierce, and had, doubtless, taken full advantage of this liberty.

"They've gone to the east," said Wingford, coming up as the boy was in the act of mounting his fleet stallion, Rokeby, which always carried him on these stirring expeditions. "See, here are their tracks, clear enough," and he pointed in the direction of some trampled grass and broken boughs.

"I guess you're right, sir," answered Dick. "Well, that's not over twenty miles. I'll have them safe back by night-fall," and waving his hand he set off at a sharp pace.

After a gallop of some miles over a long sweep of plain, Dick reined in and surveyed the ground carefully.

"They've turned off into that brushwood," he muttered, as he followed with his eye the tell-tale prints of the two steers.

The ride through the brush was not near so pleasant as the gallop over the plain—masses of undergrowth fatigued the horse, while stumps of fallen trees threatened ugly falls.

Suddenly Dick caught sight of one of the steers and set off in pursuit.

The animal almost immediately scented his pursuer, and started off on a steady run toward a distant mountain range.

For awhile the steer had the best of it, for his massive body crashed through the sharp boughs and brushwood, which caused Dick's fiery animal to bound and rear with pain.

"Now I shall have him!" cried Dick, excitedly, as they got out of the brush into the plain again.

And it began to look that way, for Rokeby was as swift as the wind on easy ground.

On rushed the steer, fairly mad with rage and terror.

"I hope he doesn't take to the mountains," breathed the boy, anxiously, for those fastnesses were as yet unexplored, and he had heard strange tales of great chasms and yawning depths that were to be found there.

"I doubt very much if I dare attempt the capture of that brute in his present state," he muttered, as his experienced eye noted the vicious movements of the black beast. "He is ugly enough to put up a desperate fight, and give me all kinds of trouble before I could manage to subdue him."

Blindly and madly the steer galloped on, the distance between them rapidly decreasing.

Suddenly, to Dick's dismay, it turned toward the mountains, and was soon clambering up the sides of the great ridges, detaching masses of broken rock in its ascent.

Dick followed, but was now at great disadvantage.

The ridges grew more steep and rugged, all signs of vegetation ceased, and nothing was before him but a white, unbroken line of rocks.

Dick's horse, exhausted with his furious riding, quivered in every limb, and each time the stones gave way beneath him he stumbled and almost fell.

Fairly brought to a standstill at last, the young American dismounted and looked around.

The steer was out of sight.

He had gone so far in among the rocks as to penetrate one of the low valleys that ran in their midst, and so all view of the way by which he had come was shut out.

To add to his troubles there was already that peculiar light in the heavens that told of the speedy approach of night—in a very short time he would be in total darkness in the midst of the mountains.

He took the saddle off Rokeby and wiped him down, after which he fed him sparingly from a bag of feed he had brought with him.

Then he ate a portion of his own bundle of food, wash-

ing the repast down with the contents of a small bottle of milk.

The horse needed water, but where he was going to find any was not quite clear to the boy.

Night fell while he was leading the animal slowly along in search of water.

Although the stars were out in all their glory, the darkness seemed unusually dense in the mountain range, where the silence was almost preternatural.

"This is the worst ever," muttered Dick, coming to a halt again. "I wonder if I mightn't just as well stop right here till sunrise."

At that moment he heard the distant sound of what he believed to be running water.

He went on once more and the noise grew clearer.

"I've struck a stream at last, I guess," he breathed.

And sure enough a hundred paces ahead he came into a gorge where, for the first time in several hours, he felt the soft touch of verdure under his feet, and where a small cataract of water was foaming down among the rocks.

It was a blissful relief for his dejected animal, who thrust his nose into the rushing stream and drank his fill.

"This is a fine place to camp for the night," said Dick. "I didn't expect such luck. It's better to be born fortunate than rich when you come to think of it. This is the second time I've fallen on my feet in the last few months."

He tethered his horse nearby and, lying down, gazed up at the winking stars and divided his thoughts between Edith Gresham and his old chum, Gip Calder, on far-away Cape Cod.

CHAPTER XI.

THE RENDEZVOUS OF THE BUSHRANGERS.

In spite of his fatiguing ride that day, Dick did not feel at all sleepy.

This was unusual with him.

He tried to woo the drowsy god, but didn't succeed worth a cent.

It wasn't that he had a hard bed to lie upon, for the verdure felt quite soft and elastic beneath him.

Somehow he got to thinking about his dead father and that ever-to-be-remembered night of storm and wreck off the Cape.

A peculiar fancy seemed to impress him that the spirit of his father was hovering about him in that wild, mountainous gorge, and though there was no reason for this strange feeling, he couldn't get it out of his head.

He rolled and tossed about on the grass, and began to wonder if he would ever get to sleep.

"I don't know what's the matter with me to-night," he muttered at length, sitting up. "Something prevents me from closing my eyes. What is it?"

He rose to his feet and started up the gorge to try and walk the feeling off.

The moment he did so he seemed to feel better.

He kept on, following the course of the stream, and getting further and further into the wilder parts of the ravine.

Suddenly he trod upon a stone that rolled under his weight, and he was thrown forward on his hands and knees.

One arm went down into a sort of gulley and struck something softer than a stone.

"I wonder what I've got hold of?" he muttered, as his fingers closed about it. "Blessed if it doesn't feel just like a pocketbook. That seems absurd in this spot."

Absurd or not, Dick pulled up his arm and found that it was indeed a good-sized wallet that he held in his hand.

"Well, if this doesn't beat the Dutch! A pocketbook lying around loose in this wilderness! I wonder to whom does it belong?" he muttered to himself, in a tone of the greatest surprise.

Just then he was treated to another sensation.

He heard the thud of horses's hoofs coming up the gorge.

They were approaching from the direction of the waterfall, in the neighborhood of which his own animal was tethered.

"Great Scott!" he said. "Who can be travelling through this range in the dark? They must be pretty familiar with the road. I'd like to know where this ravine leads to."

The horseman came on at a brisk trot, and soon Dick saw several dark forms outlined against the small patch of sky above the gorge.

As they came abreast of the boy they reined in and proceeded with more caution.

They were talking and laughing in rough tones, and the oaths that fell from their lips made the boy shiver.

"Who were these men, anyway?" he asked himself, with a feeling of alarm for which he could not account.

No honest colonist was known to live among these unexplored mountains.

The answer seemed to suggest that these fellows were bushrangers—members of the gang who occasionally made forays in the district, and whose retreat the police had been utterly unable to smoke out.

Two weeks before a small station within a few miles of that where the Gresham interests were located had been attacked in the open daylight by the bushrangers and men, women and children shot down without mercy, the buildings looted and fired, and the cattle driven off into the wilderness.

The police were still hunting for the scoundrels, but so far had met with no success, and it was believed that the McTurk gang was at the bottom of the outrage.

There were six horsemen in this party, and one of them, riding ahead, looked to be a giant in proportions.

"I believe that's McTurk himself," muttered Dick, as they passed him by. "That rascal isn't fit to live. He's clever enough to keep the police at a distance. They haven't been able to track him to his den. I think it's up to me now to take advantage of this chance to render honest men and the police a service. I'll just follow these fellows and see if my suspicions as to their identity are correct. If so,

and I can locate their headquarters, I may perhaps be the means of breaking the band up, and thus relieving the district of a source of constant terror."

Accordingly, after dropping the wallet in his pocket, Dick started on the trail of the horsemen, following them to the head of the gorge and thence into a defile which seemed to have been formed by the splitting apart of the mountain range at this point.

It was so narrow that the horsemen were forced to advance through it in single file.

At length they came out into a kind of dry basin, hedged in by giant cliffs, and here they dismounted, and leading their animals by the bridle, vanished into the bowels of the mountainside.

"Where the dickens did they go?" Dick asked himself, as the men and horses melted away before his eyes.

He advanced now with great caution, for the spot was intensely dark and he could not tell into what trap he might tumble unawares.

Now that the sound of the hoof beats and the desultory conversation of the men had ceased, there was nothing to guide him, except the direction the phantom-like forms had taken after entering the basin.

He went straight ahead until blocked by the rocky face of the mountainside, then the problem presented itself whether he should turn to the left or to the right.

He took the former way at a venture, which proved to be a narrow path among the rocks, leading downward and winding around overhanging projections until he suddenly realized he was making his way into the heart of the mountains.

"Gee whiz!" he exclaimed to himself, "I wonder where I'm going to, and shall I be able to find my way out again?"

But with true American pluck he determined to proceed.

He could not afford to let slip this exceptional chance of tracing the bushrangers, of whose identity he now felt pretty well assured, to their hiding place.

These rascals were so desperate and menacing to the district that their extermination was a public necessity.

Their movements had been so secret, and their plans so well laid that no one could tell at what point they would strike next.

"We have escaped them so far," mused Dick, "but who knows at what moment they may take a notion to drop down upon us, and with some of our men away, like I am at this moment, and the police maybe scouring the outermost boundary of the district, it would be likely to go hard with our station."

Suddenly Dick heard the sound of voices and saw the dancing rays of a light advancing toward him.

The men and the light itself were still hidden by the winding nature of the passage.

The boy knew he could not escape observation in that narrow place so he hastily began to retrace his steps.

The men behind, there seemed to be only two of them, followed.

Dick picked his steps as carefully as he could, lest the

displacing of a stone should attract the suspicious notice of the fellows in his rear.

In this way he got back into the open air of the basin again, and, crawling behind a boulder, awaited developments.

Presently two men appeared with a lantern and stopped within a couple of feet of where he lay concealed.

The light flashing upon their features disclosed their identity.

One was the herculean, bewhiskered ruffian he had seen in the Melbourne saloon, while the other, much to Dick's surprise, was Ned Martin.

CHAPTER XII.

THE CONVERSATION BETWEEN NED MARTIN AND M'TURK THAT DICK OVERHEARD.

"We can talk here without being overheard by the rest," said the giant, putting down the lantern. "What is it you've got to say to me?"

"I've got this to say," began Martin. "When I joined you chaps it was because I had a particular object in view."

"Well," answered the big ruffian, regarding his companion with a suspicious glare. "What was your object?"

"To discover a reef of gold which exists somewhere in these mountains."

"A reef of gold!" exclaimed the other, incredulously.

"Exactly—a reef of gold."

"Man, you're crazy."

"Am I?"

"There's no gold in this range that I ever heard of, and some of us have been in this region off and on for years."

"That doesn't prove it isn't here."

"What put that idea into your head, Martin?"

"I'll tell you. I'm as certain as I breathe that there's a golden reef not ten miles from this very place, so rich that if you and I can find it we will be wealthy men for the rest of our lives."

His companion laughed almost mockingly, but Martin went on without noticing it.

"I told you that I came from the States," he said.

"You did."

"I had been running in an unlucky groove for years when I got a job as assistant keeper in a lighthouse on the Manacle Reef off the coast of Cape Cod, Massachusetts. I had been there three months, and it was a dog's life I led, for there were but two of us on duty, the rules were strict about drinking, and the reef was six miles off the shore, when a terrific gale came on, the like of which I had never seen before, and along toward morning a ship went ashore on the rocks. It was no fault of ours that this happened. The light was all right, and the fog-horn had been going for hours, for the mist was as thick as a stone wall."

"What has all this to do with this golden reef you were speaking of a moment ago?" asked the other, impatiently.

"Everything," replied Martin. "As I was saying, a vessel came ashore, and of all aboard her but one man escaped—that was the cap'n, and I saved him."

Dick, listening with all his ears, gave utterance to an involuntary cry.

It wasn't loud, but the sound reached the ears of the giant and he exclaimed:

"What's that?"

"What?" asked Martin.

"I heard a noise close by."

"You must have been mistaken," replied Martin.

The big man, however, wasn't so sure of that.

He grabbed up the lantern, flashed it around among the adjacent rocks, and peered about, carefully.

But he overlooked the boulder almost at his feet, and so Dick escaped discovery.

"Go on," said the ruffian, at length, putting the lantern on the ground again, "but cut it short."

"I pulled the man out of the water, took him into the lighthouse and recognized him as one I had not seen for years, and for whom I had no love, for he had wounded me in the tenderest spot a man can be touched, and I had never forgiven him."

"Well?"

"After all, I enacted the role of the Good Samaritan and put a bit of life into him," with a sardonic laugh, "and things would have gone well with him, but I discovered he had a fat pocketbook on his person, and he made the admission that it contained his 'fortune.' I was down to bed-rock and the old boy easily tempted me to steal that pocketbook while its owner was apparently in a deep sleep. "I found the 'fortune' to which he had referred, together with a few hundred dollars in cash. This fortune was represented by a piece of old, dirty wrapping paper, on which were written words detailing the discovery by the writer of a reef of gold in the Victoria Mountains of New South Wales, Australia, with directions for locating the same."

"Is this a fact?" exclaimed his companion, for the first time showing a decided interest in Martin's story.

"It is a fact, as sure as I'm standing here."

"Go on!" cried the other, eagerly.

"How this paper came to be in the possession of this shipwrecked sea captain, whose name was George Porter, and what became of the man who discovered the golden reef, is a mystery to me. But the paper was there, and I determined to possess it. It was my intention to secure this gold for myself without the cap'n's knowledge."

"And of course you did?"

"Unfortunately for him, he woke up, saw the pocketbook in my hand, accused me of intending to rob him, and in the struggle which followed I struck him down. The blow was fatal. Finding that I had unintentionally killed him, my sole idea was to get rid of the body, lest trouble follow, and so I threw it into the sea, and it was washed upon the Cape some hours later, found and in due time buried."

Dick had listened with growing horror to Martin's revelation.

When the man admitted that he had killed Captain Porter that fateful morning in the lighthouse and tossed the body into the waves, the boy was so overcome that for some moments he did not know what was going on about him.

When he recovered his self-possession somewhat it was to feel an overpowering sense of resentment against his father's murderer, as he so considered him.

"I left the lighthouse in a hurry, shipped for Melbourne, and the day after my arrival I met you. You never told me you were the notorious bushranger, McTurk, or I don't think I'd have come up the country with you," went on Martin.

A sarcastic grin played around the corners of the giant's mouth.

"I joined your band partly because I had to, and partly because I found that your headquarters was here in the Victoria range. I meant to find that golden reef and——"

"Shake us, I suppose," interrupted the chief of the bushrangers, grimly. "Well, why didn't you find it? You have the directions, you say."

"For two reasons."

"What are they?"

"In the first place I found no chance to go off by myself to hunt for the spot."

"Of course you didn't. You are a new member of the band, and until I knew you better and learned how far I could trust you I had you watched."

"I know that," admitted Martin.

"What's your second reason?" asked McTurk, curiously.

"I lost the pocketbook."

"With the directions?"

"Yes."

"Where did you lose it?"

"I haven't the least idea, but I think it was somewhere in the gorge."

Dick's hand unconsciously sought the pocket into which he had dropped the wallet he had found a short time before, and a thrill went through him as he realized that Providence, in a strange way, had put his father's property into his possession.

"We must hunt for it," said McTurk, "unless you can remember the directions as written down on the paper."

"I recollect them only in a general way, but it is possible, with your abundant knowledge of these mountains, that you may be able to recognize the locality where the reef is situated. It is in a pocket somewhere off the valley below, and from a certain point of the compass three dead trees can be seen half way up the mountainside. Three hundred paces from a point directly beneath them will bring you to the neighborhood of the golden reef. Then there are other landmarks, which I cannot recall, that show the exact spot."

"I have seen the three trees to which you refer," said McTurk, with an eagerness new to him, "and can readily find the spot without the written directions; but the other points may be necessary to know before we could find the reef. We will keep this secret to ourselves, Martin, and

will search for the gold directly we have concluded the expedition on which we are bound to-morrow."

"What expedition is that?"

"I forgot, you and those who have been hiding here since the Duggleby station was raided the other day, have not yet been told about this new forray I have in mind. I have discovered that the police are off south on a false scent, and the Barton station, thirty miles east of here, offers a fine field for our enterprise."

Dick held his breath with apprehension, for the Barton station was the name of the place in the immediate neighborhood of which the Gresham & Wingford interests were centered.

"Some new cattle raisers arrived there from England a few months ago, and they have brought out here a fine herd of blooded stock to begin business with. One of them, a man named Gresham, I understand, is well off in other ways. Our men are eager for another brush with these colonists, as we are nearly always successful in getting away with the booty we aim for. After that, while the band is under cover, we will look up this golden reef together. If we find it, then we will go equal partners in the speculation. You will stake off the claim, announce the discovery in Melbourne, and offer it for sale. I will keep in the background, of course; but I shall have my eye on you just the same, and it would not pay you to play me false."

"You need have no fear of that," said Martin, frankly.

"I haven't," replied the chief of the bushrangers, with a snap of his massive jaw. "As soon as we realize, we will leave the country for good, at least I will, if the reef pans out what it ought to. Now let's go back or the boys will begin to wonder what we're up to, and I don't believe in arousing their suspicions. We've got to turn in, anyway, for we shall start for Barton's some time before noon so as to reach there by dark."

McTurk picked up the lantern and, followed by Martin, retired by the way they had come.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE GOLDEN REEF.

Dick did not stir from his refuge behind the boulder for some minutes after Ned Martin and the chief of the bushrangers had returned into their mountain retreat.

He wanted to make sure that the coast was clear before he made a move.

Then, too, his thoughts were busy with the discoveries he had made that night, the most appalling of all of which was that his dear father had practically been murdered by the assistant lightkeeper, Martin, for possession of the secret of the golden reef, situated in those very mountains in which his son had wandered in pursuit of the refractory steer that afternoon.

It seemed as if Providence had ment that the inhuman

deed should not redound to the unscrupulous rascal's advantage after all, for, after reaching the actual neighborhood of the golden reef, for which he had sold his soul, so to speak, he had lost the stolen pocketbook which contained the directions to find the object of his quest, and that pocketbook had, in the most wonderful way, fallen into the hands of the boy for whose eventual benefit it had been originally intended.

"The ways of heaven are most strange," thought Dick, reverently, as he turned over in his mind the incidents through which he had just passed. "There was evidently an All-wise purpose in that particular steer leading me into these trackless mountains. I have learned many things because of it. The truth of my dream that night that I saw my father cast upon the Manacles and saved by Martin is confirmed. I have learned what has hitherto been only known to the man who did the deed that my dear father was murdered. I have in my possession the pocketbook containing the secret through which he lost his life. But what, is of more immediate importance, I have discovered the hiding place of the villainous bushrangers who have of late terrorized portions of this district; and I have learned, in good time I hope to frustrate them, the intentions of these scoundrels to attack the Barton station, for the plunder they hope to obtain thereby."

Having satisfied himself that he might hope to withdraw from the basin without incurring observation, Dick left his hiding place and walked in the direction he believed the entrance to the narrow defile lay.

It was not easy to find, but by patient endeavor the boy at last came upon it and took his way through it.

This brought him out at the head of the gorge, and he made a mental note of the fact.

Then he followed the gorge down to the spot where his horse was tethered.

The animal had lain down in a comfortable spot to rest and sleep.

"It is fortunate those rascals did not discover my horse, otherwise they would have known some one, whose society they did not care for, was close by, and they would have searched till they had found me," said Dick, as he sat down near the miniature waterfall. "I dare say I can afford to take some rest myself for a few hours, for I feel that I need it. Providence will surely preserve me against any peril to-night."

Resolving he would be up and stirring at the first glow of dawn, and being now accustomed to getting out of bed at sunrise, Dick lay down beside his horse, closed his eyes and was soon asleep.

He awoke as the early morning light was beginning to make objects visible throughout the rocky valley, and after giving his horse the last of his feed, and finishing his own package of food, he mounted and rode up the stony valley in the direction, as near as he could guess, that he had come the preceding evening.

He had been careful to note all the landmarks about the entrance to the gorge, and felt satisfied he could lead the

mounted police right to the door of the bushrangers' retreat.

He had little idea of his actual whereabouts in the mountain range.

He was by no means certain that he could find his way out by the road he had entered, for the steer had not selected any beaten path, if such existed.

He must, in a measure, trust to luck.

His nautical experience, however, stood him in good stead.

He made out clearly the southeast, which he must needs take to return to the Barton station.

The main point just now was to extricate himself from the mountain range.

The way was so rough, and the pitfalls so numerous that he dared not urge his animal to any great speed.

However, that fact did not worry him, as he knew, when once he reached the plain, Rokeby would carry him like the wind to his destination, and that he should reach the station in ample time to raise the alarm before dark, which was the hour the bushrangers proposed to descend upon the unsuspecting cattle people.

His calculations, however, all depended on his luck in getting clear of the mountains, and as hour after hour went by he seemed to be no nearer that happy end than when he started from the mouth of the gorge.

The bushrangers had arranged to start for the station some time before noon, and mid-day was rapidly approaching, as Dick could tell from the position of the sun, and the young American had not yet got out of the range.

He was now beginning to worry, for things were not coming his way as he had calculated.

At last, however, there appeared a clear break in the mountains, and toward this he made his way.

As his eyes glanced ahead he noticed three dead-looking trees about half-way up one side of the mountain.

The sight of them sent a sudden thrill through his body.

Until that moment his thoughts had been largely engrossed with Edith Gresham and the peril which threatened the station, to the exclusion even of the pocketbook which had belonged to his father, and now reposed in his jacket pocket.

Those three trees must be the first landmark that indicated the near presence of the golden reef, for so he had heard Ned Martin state.

He remembered his words, and that 300 paces from a spot directly beneath them would bring one to the immediate neighborhood of the hidden precious metal.

In spite of his great anxiety for the safety of those at the station toward which he was hastening, he reined in Rokeby and drew the wallet from his pocket.

Upon the flap he saw his father's full name in gilt letters, and tears filled his eyes.

Choking back a sob he opened the pocketbook.

The first compartment contained eight five-pound Bank of England notes, in all, the equivalent of \$200 in American money.

There were several newspaper clippings about the Australian gold fields, taken from Melbourne papers.

Martin had thrown away all of George Porter's memorandums, but their loss, of which Dick was ignorant, did not affect the boy, as they were of no special value.

There was nothing else until Dick looked into the last compartment in search of the precious document relating to the golden reef, and there, sure enough, he found it, a soiled and deeply creased piece of brown paper.

Carefully unfolding it he read it over slowly, as its composition compelled him to do.

Yes, here was a brief description of a golden reef in the Victoria Mountain Range, New South Wales, the very rocks alive with glittering quartz, the like of which no man had yet seen. There were millions in sight.

Dick Porter held his breath as he read the entrancing picture.

The directions guided the searcher first to a break in the range, which he was to follow till he caught sight of three dead trees half way up the mountainside.

"That's those yonder," breathed the boy.

"From a point directly beneath them measure off 300 paces in an easterly direction, when you will come to a pile of white stones, the center one of which is a dark one, by which sign you shall identify it. Then turn toward the southeast and you will see a similar pile of stones some distance away. From that pile walk directly up the mountainside till you come to a kind of shelf. Follow the shelf around till it ends abruptly in a crevice, six feet tall, but wide enough for a man to pass with some little difficulty. Enter and follow, and the golden reef will be your reward."

"I will make my way there now," said Dick, "for from that shelf I may be able to see the plain beyond and the way I should take to reach it."

So he dismounted at a spot beneath the three dead trees, paced off 300 yards in the direction indicated and came upon the pile of stones with the black one in their midst.

Looking to the southeast he readily made out the second pile, perhaps an eighth of a mile away, and lost no time in going up to it.

Tying his horse, he started directly up the mountainside, and about five hundred feet up came to the shelf.

Standing upon this, he clearly saw the way out of the range to the plain which he saw he could easily reach and was happy.

"Rokeby is as fresh as a daisy. I shall make good time to the station," he said to himself, with a great sense of relief. "Now to get a glimpse of the golden reef."

He followed the shelf for some little distance along the mountainside until at last he came to the rift in the rocks.

He found no trouble in pushing his way through into a narrow, amphitheater-like depression in the range, and here, under the brilliant sunshine, the aspect of the walls quite dazzled him.

In nooks and corners brilliant fragments appeared, which reflected the rainbow's brightest hues; while one great

block was clear and pellucid as running water, save for the dazzling brilliancy of the colors reflected by the sun's rays.

Fairly bewildered, Dick stood transfixed.

Then he stooped to examine the rocks more carefully.

For some yards around they all presented the same dazzling appearance.

In among the quartz were pieces of pure yellow metal—in some places wide streaks of it.

One or two of the jutting fragments were so soft that he could break them off.

Dick was quite dizzy with excitement.

Those yellow, shining fragments, encrusted in the glittering quartz, were surely gold—pure, virgin gold!

He had discovered the great golden reef which had cost his father his life!

CHAPTER XIV.

HOW DICK SAVED EDITH GRESHAM.

Dick was quite overpowered by the dazzling display of virgin ore about him, and he could not feast his eyes enough upon it.

Truly, there seemed to be millions in sight, but whether there actually was that amount there altogether he could not tell, not being a competent judge of the value of the outcroppings.

He hated to tear himself away from the place, but after wasting a good twenty minutes in contemplating nature's abundant display of wealth, he realized that it was high time that he should be off.

He collected together a handkerchief full of golden nuggets, and then with a final look at the golden reef he made his way back to the shelf, thence down the mountainside, and mounting his horse rode off in the direction which would soonest take him out on the plain.

Once clear of the mountain he put Rokeby to his best pace, and they raced across the level ground toward the southeast at whirlwind speed.

It was past one o'clock now and he had many miles before him before he could hope to sight Barton station.

And Gresham's was five miles further on to the south.

The ground Dick was traversing was new to him, but he expected soon to strike familiar landmarks that would tell him just where he was.

The boy couldn't expect to drive Rokeby at such a high rate of speed very far, so when the animal showed signs of distress he pulled him in, and they proceeded at a more reasonable gait.

At length when the sun was approaching the horizon Dick began to recognize familiar ground, and feeling assured he had still a couple of hours before him he reduced the measured gallop to a walk in order to rest the animal for his final spurt.

Darkness was fast coming on when he came in sight of Barton's.

Strange to say, he had seen none of the herdsmen on his road.

However, there stood the big log hut, and the smoke issuing serenely from the wide chimney told him that all was well at this station, which was, as he understood it, the first objective point of the coming raid.

He did not relax his speed, however, but still sped on, with his eyes fastened in the direction of Gresham's.

Then as he turned his eyes again upon Barton's he saw, far beyond the station, and well to the south, a succession of flying specks.

They were aiming for a point that would bring them to Gresham's about the time that darkness would cover the landscape.

Under ordinary circumstances, Dick would have judged this to be some hunting party returning home, but with the knowledge he had of the bushrangers' purpose he guessed at once that those specks were the scoundrels who had changed their plans somewhat—was giving Barton's a wide berth until they had first attacked and devastated the Gresham station.

The thought of Edith Gresham being exposed to injury, if not death, at the hands of McTurk's ruffianly crew was more than Dick could endure.

He must rouse the folks at Barton's to go to the rescue. With a cry that penetrated the air ahead, Dick lashed his horse toward the station.

He was close to Barton's now—so close that his thrilling cry was heard, and the men, one by one, left off their work to see what was the matter.

Mr. Barton came to the door of the hut and looked toward the onrushing horse with some surprise.

Several of his hands had joined him as Dick dashed up, and, pointing at the distant specks, shouted, with thrilling earnestness:

"The bushrangers! They're going to attack our place!"

Everybody at Barton's knew Dick Porter, and where he was employed, therefore "our place" was readily understood to mean Gresham's.

The warning cry, "the bushrangers!" was enough to throw the station into a momentary confusion.

The scoundrels were feared and detested by the community at large.

But the late massacre at Duggleby's had angered the cattlemen to the boiling point, and they vowed that with or without help from the police they would do up the villainous band at the first opportunity, or die in the attempt.

The moment Barton and his herders realized the import of Dick's words, a cry of rage went up from their lips, and without an order being spoken each man, of his own accord, rushed for his rifle and a horse to carry him to Gresham's.

In less time than one would have supposed possible to muster a party together, ten men, the whole number Barton's station could muster, were mounted and ready to ride against the bushrangers.

Fortunately, there were no women at Barton's or half

the party would have been obliged to remain at the station to protect them against a possible division of the enemy.

Dick and his horse were well nigh exhausted by their long ride and they not having tasted food since daybreak, and then but a very meager quantity.

The boy realized that neither he nor his animal was in condition to accompany the rescue party, much as he desired to do so.

So he mentioned the fact to Mr. Barton.

"We were just putting supper on the table as you rode up, Dick," he replied. "You will find all you require in the hut. When you have refreshed yourself and your horse you can follow us and be in at the death, I hope.

With that he gave the signal to spur forward, and, with a hoarse shout, the ten men and their sturdy leader put spurs to their animals and dashed away in a cloud of dust.

Dick entered the hut and drank a glass of cool water first to clear his throat.

Then he went out and rubbed his horse down, and led him to a convenient stall, where he set before him a supply of oats.

Being now at liberty to look after himself, he returned to the hut, took a tin pannikin and dipped it into a great pot of half-cooled soup.

With a hunk of bread in one hand and the soup before him he devoured both with great relish, and never had anything tasted half so delicious.

Dick wasted very little time over his meal.

He ate till he was fairly satisfied, and then rushed for his horse, who by this time had got away with his feed and was feeling like a new animal.

Dick now gave him a drink.

In a moment the brave young American was on his back again, and speeding madly over the plain toward Gresham's.

The only arms he had was the pair of revolvers carried in the holsters, and these were ready for business at any moment.

Darkness had now fallen upon the landscape and the night air blew athwart the boy's heated cheeks.

As he galloped madly along, with his eyes intently fixed in the direction of the home station, his heart suddenly gave a great bound as he beheld a bright glare shoot up into the sky.

"The villains are there and have fired the house or one of the outbuildings," he cried, with a groan almost of despair. "Heaven save Edith and the rest from the fate that hangs over them!"

Dick dared not picture to himself the scene that was being enacted at the station.

The stories that he had heard of the bushrangers were horrible enough, even apart from that last terrible butchery at Duggleby's, where the women and children had met with not the slightest consideration at the hands of those ruffians.

He urged his horse on to fresh exertion, for every arm was needed now.

And now he heard the sharp reports of firearms.

"Thank heaven!" he muttered, in a tense tone. "Barton and his men have arrived and I'll bet something is doing all right."

The sounds of fighting grew every moment more distinct.

Dick, scarce a mile away, could see the vivid flashes of the rifles both from the main house, which the boy was thankful to see was not afire, and from a score of points outside.

It was an out-house which was ablaze, and a second one had just been ignited.

The conflict was fierce, and yells and cries rent the air.

Dick was within half a mile of the scene of trouble when he made out through the gloom a horse and rider approaching at breakneck speed.

At the same moment a woman's scream rang out on the air so close that the boy judged it came from the oncoming horse.

"Great Scott!" cried Dick, reining in Rokeby. "One of the miscreants is carrying off one of the women. Suppose it should be Edith?"

The very thought of that turned his blood to a fever heat of passion.

He darted forward to cut off the rider.

The man perceived him, drew his revolver, aimed hurriedly at the brave boy and fired.

The bullet whistled unpleasantly close to Dick's head.

He dared not return the shot, for he saw the white dress of the burden the rascal bore across his saddle in front.

He spoke to his horse and the animal responded with a gallant leap forward.

Again the revolver was discharged, but Dick bent low over his animal's neck and the bullet whistled harmlessly by.

They were closing rapidly, and once more the woman screamed and as the fellow fired again her struggles upset his aim and the shot went up into the air.

"Stop, you scoundrel!" roared Dick, furiously.

A mocking laugh came back.

The boy's blood was up and he lashed Rokeby to his highest speed.

He was now coming up, hand over hand, on the man, who was handicapped by his prisoner.

At length Dick saw a safe chance to fire at him and he opened with a couple of rapid shots.

It was immediately evident that one at least of them had reached its mark, for the bushranger swayed in his saddle.

Dick fired again and the villain fell forward over his burden.

His horse slackened its speed, and a moment later the boy dashed up alongside and grasped at the woman, who seemed to be slipping to the ground.

In a trice he had his arm around her and lifted her onto his horse, which he pulled in, all covered with foam, allowing the wounded bushranger to escape if he could.

Tearing away the mantle which had been wound around the prisoner's head, he uttered a cry of surprise and com-

passion as he recognized the white countenance of Edith Gresham, as she lay back, motionless and unconscious, in his arms.

CHAPTER XV.

THE DEFEAT OF THE BUSHRANGERS.

Dick could not carry Edith back to the station where the fighting was going on, so he decided to return with her to Barton's.

He turned his horse's head in that direction and urged him on to a good speed.

Gradually the sound of firing behind him grew fainter and further apart, but the burning out-houses threw a ruddier glare than ever across the plain.

He was about half-way back to Barton's when Edith revived, opened her eyes and started to struggle in his arms.

"Be quiet, Edith. You are safe with me," said Dick, stifling a scream that was on her lips, and looking down into her eyes.

The girl looked up, with wonder, into his face as if she could not believe the evidence of her senses.

"Don't you recognize me in the dark, Edith? Don't you know my voice? I saved you from that ruffian who was carrying you off on his horse, and I just reached you in the nick of time."

"Dick, oh, Dick!" she cried, impulsively, throwing her arms about his neck, and nestling her head upon his shoulder. "Is it indeed really you?"

"It is I all right," he replied, gaily.

"And you saved me?"

"I am guilty of having done so."

"Oh, Dick, Dick, how can I ever thank you enough?"

"Oh, we won't quarrel on that point, Edith."

"How did you do it?" she asked, eagerly.

The boy told her.

"You're so brave!" she cried, admiringly.

"Come now, no bouquets, or——"

"Or what?"

"I'll do something desperate."

"Why, what do you mean?"

"I mean that if you don't quit praising me I'll—I'll kiss you."

"Oh!" she cried, blushing rosily.

"I suppose you'd be angry if I did?" he went on.

"No, Dick," she replied, after a pause. "I couldn't be angry with you under any circumstances."

Well, did he kiss her after that? Perhaps he did. Dick wasn't in the habit of letting any of the good things of life get by him.

Whether he did or did not she seemed perfectly contented to remain in his arms until Barton station was reached.

He let her slip lightly to the ground, dismounted himself and led Rokeby into an out-house.

Then he came back and led Edith into the house, where he lit a lamp and sat down beside her.

"I'm so nervous about mamma and papa," she said, with a little hysterical sob.

"Tell me about the attack of the bushrangers, and how that villain got you into his hands," he asked, putting his arm protectively around her.

"It was just getting dark when Joe Glass, one of our herders, rushed into the house and told papa there was a crowd of horsemen approaching at a gallop and that he feared their intentions were not peaceable. Papa went outside to look. Almost immediately I heard the report of a gun. Then another. And then all was confusion about the place. I heard somebody shout, 'The bushrangers!' and I was so frightened I didn't know what to do. I'd been worried all day over your absence. You should have returned last night, even if you didn't get the steers. One of them was caught over at Stanley's and returned to us this morning. There was more firing, and then one of the outbuildings blazed up. Papa came back for his rifle and told mamma to barricade the door. He had hardly gone outside again before that man from whom you rescued me rushed in at the door. Mamma is very brave. She had taken papa's revolver from a table drawer, and she fired at him. He swore terrible, dashed across the room, seized me, and holding me as a shield between himself and mamma, made for the door. Just then papa and several of our men came up, but the man darted around the corner of the house. I screamed and then I must have fainted, for the next thing I knew I was being carried across the plain on horseback. I screamed as hard as I could and fought him. I saw him turn and fire at some one——"

"That was me," said Dick.

"Was it?" she answered, with a shudder, and clinging to him. "How dreadful!"

"What then?"

"I don't remember anything more till I heard you talking to me. I thought he still had me, and——"

"You struggled and was going to scream again when I stopped you, and asked you if you didn't know me?"

"Yes. But, oh, Dick, do you think mamma and papa are safe or are they——"

She burst out crying.

"I'm sure they're all right, for I sent Barton and all his men over to our places before the bushrangers had reached there."

"You sent them, Dick? Why, how——"

"I discovered that those chaps were going to attack Barton's here to-night, and came on to warn him. Before I reached this station I saw the bushrangers at a distance, headed for our place. Then I knew they had changed their plans, and I hurried Barton and his men ahead to cut them off if possible, or to jump in and help beat them off if they arrived at your father's station first."

At that moment shots were heard at a distance, and they both ran to the door to look.

There was a distant sound of flying horses' hoofs, and

occasionally a spurt of flame, followed by the report of a rifle.

Nearer and nearer they came, though not directly in line with the station.

Finally the sounds passed by half a mile away toward the northwest.

Presently a horseman rode up to the station and alighted.

It was Mr. Barton.

"Why, Miss Gresham!" he exclaimed, as his eyes lighted on her. "Is it possible you are safe?"

"Yes, yes; but papa and——"

"They're safe. We arrived in the nick of time and beat the rascals off. Some of my men and your father's are chasing them now towards the mountains. Your father is with them, for he believes they have carried you off."

"One of them did carry me from the station, but Dick saved me."

"Good for you, young man. You deserve a medal."

"I'd better ride on after the pursuing party, hadn't I, sir? And try and overtake Mr. Gresham. Otherwise he's sure to follow those rascals into the mountains, and he and the others may be overcome by reinforcements to the gang, for I don't believe the whole crowd came down here."

"Yes. You'd better start," agreed Mr. Barton. "I'll take Miss Edith back to her home."

So once more Dick mounted Rokeby and started him across the plain at his best pace, but he didn't come up to the party for two hours, after they had had another battle with the bushrangers, a portion of whom had managed to get clean away in the darkness.

Mr. Gresham was frantic with grief and anxiety over the fate of his child until Dick rode up and joined the party.

When the boy told him he had saved Edith, and that she was home long before this, the sturdy Englishman clasped the brave young American in his arms and told him that henceforth he looked upon him as a son.

CHAPTER XVI.

OUR STORY COMES TO AN END.

Word having been sent to the police station, twenty miles away, about the attack made on Gresham station by the Bushrangers, a strong party of them rode up to the place about noon on the following day.

Dick had already detailed his adventures in the mountains, omitting his discovery of the golden reef, and he now told the officer in charge that he knew where the retreat of the bushrangers was, and that if a large force was made up he was ready to lead the way and point the villains' rendezvous out.

This offer was readily accepted, so Mr. Gresham got his men together, and the party went on to Barton's where that stock-raiser joined him with his men, and the force, well armed and fired with determination to rid the district of

the scoundrels, set out at once for the mountains, where they arrived at dusk.

They camped for supper, and then, after two hours' rest, Dick guided them up the stony valley till they came to the mouth of the gorge and the waterfall.

It was now midnight.

They left their horses tethered at this spot and then, like so many phantoms, they followed Dick up to the entrance of the narrow defile at the head of the gorge.

Through the defile they stealthily advanced without meeting with any opposition, and the party entered the gloomy basin.

The bushrangers evidently counted on complete safety within their natural retreat, for they did not appear to regard it as necessary to establish a watch at the mouth of the defile.

Never before had their particular domain been invaded even by the police, for the stony valley obliterated all their tracks, and no man guessed whither they had retired after a forray.

Now vengeance was about to descend upon them, and they were, seemingly, unprepared for the final act in the bloody drama.

The bushrangers, however, since Dick's visit, had not left the opening to their cave entirely unprotected.

McTurk, soon after their return from their unsuccessful descent upon the Gresham station, suspecting that, as they had been tracked to the range, an attempt might be made by the mounted police to thoroughly explore the wild fastnesses of the mountains, had caused a barrel of gunpowder to be jammed in the rocks about the opening, and a fuse laid a few yards inside the entrance.

That night, for the first time, a man was stationed at the mouth of the cave to stand watch, and was relieved every hour by a comrade.

The unsuspecting invaders silently approached the stronghold, but not so silently but their presence was detected by the man on watch.

He darted back and fired the fuse as the police, headed by Dick, came clustering up to the opening.

The young American suddenly saw the sputtering slow match rushing toward them like a fiery snake.

He comprehended the trap and roared out:

"Look out! Back, all of you! Throw yourselves on the ground or you are lost!"

The words were hardly out of his mouth before the explosion came.

The rocks heaved and split asunder as if they were living things, great masses flew through the air, while a dense, sulphurous smoke rendered the mouth of the cave invisible for several minutes.

Dick escaped instant death by the skin of his teeth, but many of the police and herdsman were more or less severely wounded.

Fortunately, not one of them was killed, nor actually put out of business.

"Forward, my lads!" cried the officer in command of the expedition, as soon as the air cleared, and a rush was

made into the passage where the bushrangers were caught like rats in a trap.

A desperate fight ensued—a fight to the death, for the rascals asked not nor did they expect any mercy.

Capture meant a short shift at the end of a noosed rope, and they preferred to die with their boots on upon their own ground.

Combatant after combatant fell, the casualties not being confined to the bushrangers by any means.

Gradually the superior force and determination of the invaders prevailed.

The giant McTurk fought like a lion until brought to his knees by a bullet from Dick's revolver, and then he fought on, after killing and wounding half a dozen of his enemies altogether.

Finally he fell dead, with a bullet through his brain, and his death threw the survivors into a panic.

There were eight prisoners taken, all but one more or less desperately wounded.

Dick looked about for Ned Martin after it was all over, but he was not to be found in the cave.

The dead bushrangers were buried in the basin, and the prisoners were carried back across the plain to the police station.

Afterward they were taken to Palgrave, tried for their crimes, and duly executed.

The day after the extermination of the bushrangers Dick had a private conversation with Mr. Gresham.

He told Edith's father about his discovery of the golden reef in the mountains.

The astonished cattle-raiser readily agreed to go with him and inspect the remarkable find.

Accompanied by Wingford, they set off for the Victoria range next morning, and once arrived there the young American readily pointed out the different landmarks, and they ascended the mountainside to the shelf.

Dick was the first through the fissure, and here a surprise awaited him.

Kneeling on the ground, with his back to him, was a big, strapping man.

The noise made by Dick caused him to turn his head in a startled way, and then the boy recognized Ned Martin.

He jumped to his feet, with an oath, and faced Dick, like an animal at bay.

His hand went to his pocket, where he carried a revolver, and he had half drawn it when Mr. Gresham appeared, and close behind him Charles Wingford.

"What are you doing here?" demanded Martin, angrily.

"I think the question applies to you, Edward Martin," replied Dick, resolutely. "You are the man who killed my father and stole from him the secret of this spot."

"It is a lie!" cried Martin, hoarsely.

"It is not a lie. It is the truth, and you know it. You saved my father from the waves the night that the Granite State went ashore on the Manacles but when you had discovered that he possessed the secret of the golden reef in these mountains you killed him in order to secure it for yourself."

"It was an accident," gasped Martin, fairly brought to bay. "I struck him down, but I did not intend to kill him."

"But you did, and then you fled the lighthouse next day. You lost the pocketbook in the gorge leading to the bushrangers' retreat and I found it there, and in it the paper for possession of which you stand convicted of at least manslaughter. What have you to say for yourself?"

Ned Martin was amazed at the extent of the boy's information on the subject, and his face betrayed his guilt.

"Your companions, the McTurk gang, have been exterminated, and several are now on the road to the scaffold. You are as guilty in the eyes of the law as they."

"I'll never be taken alive!" cried Martin, desperately, drawing his revolver.

"There are three revolvers against you, Edward Martin," replied Dick, coldly. "We have you dead to rights. Still, I am willing to give you a chance. I do not care to be the one to put the noose about your neck, though you have deeply wronged me. Go; try to save yourself if you can!"

Dick sold his rights in the golden reef to a company of Melbourne capitalists for \$100,000 cash, and a big percentage on all the ore taken out, netting him, eventually, more than \$2,000,000.

He became a partner with Mr. Gresham and Charles Wingford in the cattle-raising business in upper New South Wales, and is to-day several times a millionaire.

Three years ago he made a visit to the United States, and he did not come alone.

He brought his wife, a lovely young matron once known as Edith Gresham, and with them came Dick Porter, Jr., aged three.

Of course, their objective point was Southold, on Cape Cod, where Dick found that time had worked many changes.

But there were some things which had not changed—Gip Calder's friendship for his old chum and the Manacles, with the newly painted lighthouse rising like a white specter from the sea, six miles to the windward.

A noble granite shaft rose above a quiet grave in the little churchyard, on which was carved the representation of a ship upon the rocks, with the inscription below: "Sacred to the memory of Captain George Porter, of the ship Granite State, lost, with all hands, on the Manacles, May 4."

THE END.

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